

THE DRAMATIZATION OF
PROFESSIONAL CRIME IN BRITISH
FILM 1946-1965

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ABSTRACT

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The study was conceived in response to the identification of a number of weaknesses in knowledge in British Cinema studies, but centrally to the limited understanding of the identity of the British crime genre in critical discourse. The research investigated the theme of professional crime and how it is dramatized in the British crime film in the central years of the crime genre's place within British film production 1946-1965. The specific address of the study was to the current revision of genre theory and criticism within the post-structuralist recognition of the importance of the socio-historical context of production.

Using the evidence from the analysis of exemplary film texts in their socio-historical and industrial context the research examined the claim that the British crime film is a genre of social significance (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999). The research also presented a quantification analysis of the crime genre and professional crime film in the industrial context of British film production to gain the complementary advantage of combining quantitative and textual analyses (Allen et al., 1997). The results established the crime genre as a leading category of British film production between 1930 and 1985.

The research found that the analysis of film texts in their social and historical context is greatly assisted by the application of genre theory. Analysis revealed that British crime films that dramatize professional crime between 1946 and 1965 are products of a system of hybrid generic film production within which the melodramatic mode is the most persistent and significant articulation. The investigation showed that the British crime film has authenticity in terms of its engagement with cinematic and social concerns. The British crime film between 1946 and 1965 is a vehicle for dealing with the fears and anxieties of social change during the process of postwar adjustment. These films are generally reproductive of the social order, but less discursive about contemporary law and order issues than they are about disruptions to masculine identities.

DEDICATION

To Christine Boydell and my parents.

James Cagney was the one up both our streets.
His was the only art we ever shared.
A gangster film and choc ice were the treats
That showed about as much love as he dared.
(Tony Harrison, *Continuous*)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose and scope of the study

This study investigates the theme of professional crime and how it is dramatized in the postwar British crime film from 1946, the first complete year of peace, to the end of the black and white crime film in 1965. This period encompasses the central years of the crime genre's place within British film production, particularly because of the existence of the market for the 'B' film within the institution of British cinema during that era. From the late 1940s, with an easing of the strict censorship that had traditionally been applied to the crime film, and the continuation of the studio system and the three-hour programme of exhibition, the crime genre became the leading category of films 'made in Britain' until the end of the B film in the mid-1960s. The study considers how the real life and problematic activity of professional crime, a major thematic within the crime genre during the period of study, is woven through a story-based, commodity entertainment form in a popular genre that was a staple category of British film production between 1930 and 1985. It contributes to British film studies by examining the production of meaning and the meaning of production through the use of textual analysis of exemplary film texts in their socio-historical and industrial context. The study does this with specific address to the current revision of genre theory and criticism, and to the discourses of crime and masculinity.

The investigation has been developed in response to the identification of a number of important gaps in existing knowledge and the consideration of the theoretical and methodological issues to which they relate. First, it is observed that the impact of genre studies on British cinema history has been marginal (Burton and Petley, 1998). Second, prior to the publication of *British Crime Cinema* (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999), a publication belonging to a series designed to address the scholarly neglect of British popular genres, there had been a considerable neglect of this particular genre. As well as contributing a chapter to *British Crime Cinema*, my personal involvement in that project also included helping to compile the filmography of 'underworld films'.¹ The outcomes of this involvement were the identification of a substantial body of films, especially B films, covered by this generic category and a realization that there were significant limitations to the context in which discussion of these films could meaningfully take place.

For instance, the consideration of the representation of the theme of professional crime in British film has tended to focus on gangsters, organized crime and the underworld in canonical A films. A further problem is that the British crime genre does not have a distinctive generic identity to assist in the analysis of this theme. Instead, the primary reference points have been to the reality of professional crime and to Hollywood genres such as the gangster film or *film noir*. In both cases, this reveals a particular attachment to the cultural value of the mode of realism.

Therefore, the present study addresses these limitations by including B films within the field of enquiry and expanding it to cover a broad representational thematic of

¹ 'Underworld films' have been defined as 'films in which the activities of professional criminals feature significantly or which are set in an underworld milieu' (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999, p.3).

professional criminality. It also includes a consideration of genre theory and criticism to help examine the generic qualities of the British crime film. The problem identified and addressed by the present research is the neglect of the British crime film and an absence of a sustained dialogue about genre theory and criticism in British cinema studies. There is a lack of knowledge about the generic characteristics of the British crime film and a need to examine its claim to be a genre of social significance (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999).

Thus, the objective of the thesis is to investigate the dramatization of professional crime in British film between 1946 and 1965, and report outcomes in two specific areas (genre and socio-historical significance) using textual analysis of exemplary films from the field of study. In terms of genre, there are two dimensions. First, genre theory will be used in conjunction with representational analysis to examine the production of textual meaning. In Chapter 2 it will be established that British cinema studies has generally adopted a pragmatic approach to the study of representation, particularly in relation to class, gender and national identity. The present study will advocate the use of a more theoretical approach to the analysis of representation in film texts, and aims to reflect on the pertinence of generic organization to the discursive significance of film and therefore on the efficacy of genre criticism to this process. The second aspect of genre to be reported is its application to the description of the formal and aesthetic qualities of British cinema. In this case, Chapter 2 will address, the way that British cinema has traditionally been conceived within dominant critical discourse as a dichotomy of a realist core with more fantastic, more excessive margins. In this respect, it is intended to use genre criticism in order to investigate the idea that, rather than consisting of 'continents' of realism and fantasy, British films are hybrid forms (Cook,

1996) determined by interactive strands (Barr, 1986) or forces (Lovell, 1997), of, for instance, social realism and melodrama.

In relation to the socio-historical significance of the films in the field of study, the objective of the textual analysis of professional crime films is to investigate the discourses of crime and masculinity. Crime is the primary real life referent of these films and analysis will be concerned with the way that they draw upon the contemporary verisimilitude of crime and policing and engage with issues of law and order. The media is part of the process of signification of criminality, of labelling acts and behaviours as illegal or deviant to the socially prescribed norm. Crime is also predominantly menswork and the crime film genre has traditionally been an outlet for the construction of masculinities of heroism and action, and victimization and criminalization. Thus, the major objective of the thesis is to report upon the ways that British crime films that dramatize professional crime between 1946 and 1965 are discursive about crime and masculinity in their social and historical context.

1.2 The dramatization of professional crime in British film 1946-1965

1.2.1 The dramatization in 'British film'

This, and the following, section, explains the key terms and the scope of study in more detail. The word 'dramatization' is used to indicate that the study is concerned not just with the representation, or images, of crime and masculinity, but to reflect the interest in the generic characteristics of the crime film as a primarily dramatic mode. The present study acknowledges that, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, crime content is cross-generic and therefore that a complete consideration of crime in British film would entail looking across as well as within genres (Allen et al., 1997). The rationale for

concentrating on the crime genre is that it is: (1) the only genre that has the depiction of criminality as its defining characteristic; (2) the main site for the portrayal of professional crime; (3) therefore the key genre for any dramaturgical comparison with the depiction of crime in other genres.

Concerning the problematic nature of indigenous cultural forms and national identity formation (discussed at greater length in Chapters 2 and 5), the present study adopts an economic and legal definition of British films as ‘made in Britain’, rather than using a definition based on the cultural characteristics of the films. Thus, the field of study is initially defined by the standard reference work of Gifford (1986), a catalogue of films registered as British.

1.2.2 Professional crime, organized crime and the underworld

The crime genre is a category that encompasses a wide range of crime contents and treatments of theme, so it is imperative that it is divided into more reasoned and manageable parts. The study proposes that the theme of professional crime can be used to construct a coherent sub-category and will establish it as a major representational thematic of the British crime film between 1946 and 1965.² Professional crime is the focus of the present study, as established earlier, because of its containment of the traditional generic focus on the gangster and the underworld film.

The field of study (Appendix I) consists of crime films that are considered to contain significant depictions of professional crime. The construction of this set of films is informed by a desire to include the widest variety of rationally economic professional

² Other major sub-categories of the crime film might include, for example, espionage, terrorism, and perhaps above all, the preoccupation with murder.

crimes, and not just the activities of 'organized criminals' such as gangsters or the most well known figures associated with the 'underworld'. Terms such as 'professional', 'organized' and 'underworld', therefore, are particularly important in thinking about the focus of study, and so these specialized words need to be scrutinized.

What is meant by the term 'professional crime'? 'Is it the nature of the crime, the consistency of the criminal, or the competence with which the crime is committed that leads us to use the term 'professional'?' (Hobbs, 1995, p.1). Problematically, however, categories such as professional or organized crime are not legalistically defined. They are not used in official statistics or victim surveys (Croall, 1998, p.232). In terms of victimization, for instance, some forms of professional crime, such as robbery or theft might have direct victims, whilst others might involve willing participants in the provision of illicit goods and services (p.238). It is also difficult to be representative about offenders in terms of their professional or amateur status given the scope of the activities included in the category.

Disagreement and contradiction, therefore, are bound to accompany the attempt to establish essentialist definitions, particularly with reference to the organizational and motivational aspects of professional criminality. However, some general characteristics and representative activities can be accepted as a basis for thinking about the form and content of crime films. Letkemann (1973), for instance, defines the professional offender as one who uses criminal activity to make a living. Essentially, therefore, one can take the position that 'Professional criminals do it for money...[T]hey are outside the law but inside society' (Hobbs, 1995, p.13). It is a form of work sanctioned as criminal, an activity that one can theoretically situate 'within the normative environs of

the market place' (Hobbs, 1997b, p.59). Professional crime, for example, includes a significant overlap with property crime, such as burglary, robbery, theft and fraud, crimes that provide 'an alternative means of obtaining financial reward, excitement, a sense of achievement and, for some, a career structure' (Croall, 1998, pp.228-229). The term organized crime is typically used to refer to different forms of racketeering such as extortion and the provision of prohibited goods and services.

Professional crime, then, is understood as a set of illegal activities that are economically rational. Its motivations are primarily pecuniary, although this might also more complexly involve issues of status, power and hedonism. It includes 'organized crime' which is used in its normative application to refer to 'Mafia-type' criminal syndicates or racketeering crimes. However, it is recognised that there are many other types of professional crime that involve organizational structures and elements in their operation (Mack, 1973; McIntosh, 1975).³ People involved in professional crime might be; full-time, part-time, technically skilled, negligibly skilled, lone operators, group members, formally organized, informally organized, specialists, 'all-rounders', committed, reluctant, of high-status, of low-status, successful, unsuccessful, acquisitive, powerful, powerless, hedonistic, altruistic, experienced, inexperienced, and so on.

The concept of the 'underworld' requires a similar clarification. Professional crime, labelled by society as deviant misbehaviour, is also commonly believed to take place in an environment known as the 'underworld'. This refers to people, spaces and actions both real and conceptual. Thus, McIntosh (1975) for example, defines it as both an imagined world of 'straight' society and a social milieu of real relations and functions.

³ McIntosh (1975), for example, has identified four types of organized crime; business, picaresque, craft and project crimes.

Mack (1973) divides the organization of professional crime into frontline (housebreakers, bank robbers, and so on), background (intelligence and welfare providers) and intermediate operators (receivers, contacts, transport organizers, and so on), and thus provides a categorization of the personnel of McIntosh's 'real' underworld.

The conceptualization of a corrupt netherworld (underworld) by a 'straight overworld' relies on a discourse of 'otherness' where crime is society's problem, rather than a problem of society. However, the underworld is not a concept that is the exclusive property of a deviancy-labelling normative society. It also exists as a real and imagined 'criminal fraternity', evident, for example, in the use of a slang vocabulary (cant, argot), and which suggests a subculture not of deviant outsiders, but of 'superior insiders' who exploit a vulnerable society of 'mugs' and 'punters'.

To summarize, professional crime consists of a wide range of activities undertaken by various people for predominantly economically rational reasons. The underworld is a socially and historically determined set of real and imagined spaces, people, relationships and attitudes. This is the theme that has determined which films have been chosen to form the field of study within the broad category of the crime film. The field, which is the subject of a quantification analysis in Chapter 5, is made up of feature films⁴ that are primarily non-comedic and that are regarded as containing significant depictions of professional criminality. It includes property and organized crimes, such as thefts and fraud, which are carried out by offenders in the course of their legitimate occupations or business, sometimes referred to as 'white-collar' crime, although this subject matter is not very common in British films. Also included are a small number of

⁴ Greater than thirty-nine minutes in length.

films containing private detectives, who are not paid agents of state law enforcement, but private individuals who might be making a living from crime for economically rational reasons. It excludes spy films, most murder films, and examples containing politically motivated crimes such as terrorism, categories that are sufficiently distinctive to demand specific foci of their own.

1.3 Theories, methods, and the structure of the thesis

Representational analysis has remained central to post-theoretical film studies (Nowell-Smith, 2000), and central to the uncovering of textual significance in this respect is the theoretical conviction that films are products of their time and that they provide evidence about contemporary concerns, ideas and preoccupations. The present study also accepts this theoretical position. Furthermore, it also supports and attempts to contribute to Nowell-Smith's call for a return to 'theories of the aesthetic' (p.16) in which the concern for the production of meaning should be addressed to not only *what* films mean, but *how* they mean. It is in this regard that it is proposed that the process of thinking about the relationship between film texts and their socio-historical context is assisted through the textual analysis of their participation in genre.

The bulk of the evidence in support of the research outcomes consists of the textual analysis of exemplary texts limited by their availability.⁵ However, the thesis also presents a quantification analysis of the institutional context of British film production trends. This follows the suggestion that there is a complementary advantage in

⁵ Almost forty percent of the films in the field of study were viewed in preparation of the thesis, but inevitably this was determined as much by availability as choice. Notable omissions include an under representation of films from the late forties, B films and co-features from the early fifties and B films belonging to companies such as Hammer and Danzigers. Films from the late fifties onwards are over represented, especially Butcher's B films.

combining quantitative and textual analyses (Allen et al., 1997). Quantification analysis produces results that can be used to expand textual analysis beyond the intertextual relationship between just a few films in relation to a particular analytic framework. This is achieved by establishing the overall historical shifts and patterns of, for instance, generic location of theme or trends of production. In this way, quantification can be used to provide information about how much representation there is, and so establishing not just the representational qualities of films, but also their representative dimensions.

The present study, then, is an interpretative project, and one which adheres to the post-structuralist recognition of the importance of modes of production and the socio-historical context of production (Hayward, 1996, pp.350-353), and that the production of meaning as an object of critical discourse is 'always in process' (Storey, 1993, p.85). This is also paralleled in the theoretical approach to genre underpinning the research. As will be established in Chapter 4, a current revision of genre theory and criticism conceives genre as a process-oriented activity of definitions in flux (Altman, 1999) with the continual making and remaking of meaning in critical discourse (Gledhill, 2000). The present study upholds the idea that films participate in conceptual categories in which specific texts are regarded as being intertextual members, rather than a conception in which films belong to stable and fixed taxonomies. Thus, the field of study established for the purpose of research should be regarded as a temporary grouping of intertextual affiliates at a specific moment in the critical discourse of British genre cinema and not as an exclusive or definitive sub-genre of the British crime film.

These issues are all discussed in more detail in the chapters that form the first part of the thesis. Chapter 2 contains the main survey and critical appraisal of the literature

relating to the research topic. In Chapter 3, there is a discussion of the theoretical foundation of the research in support of the rationale within which the research is pursued, including an examination of the contribution of the academic disciplines of criminology and the sociology of deviance that are used to support the investigation of discourses of crime. This identification and appraisal of theory and method concludes in Chapter 4, which is devoted to genre theory and criticism. The presentation and discussion of the evidence in support of the objectives of research begins in Chapter 5 with a quantification analysis of the field of study in the institutional context of British film production between 1930 and 1985. The presentation continues and ends with three chapters of textual analysis in which the period of study has been divided into three shorter time frames – 1946-1949, 1950-1956, and 1957-1965. This periodization relates partly to the quantification trends that will be established in Chapter 5, but above all to the distinctive ways in which discourses about crime in the films relate to the social and historical contemporaneity of their production. Finally, in Chapter 9, conclusions are considered, research is reviewed critically and the potential for further enquiry is identified.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The publication of scholarship on British cinema generally is developing rapidly, and crime films are addressed in books and research journals, but rarely as a central focus. The aim of this literature review is to establish the place of the crime film within British cinema studies and to identify what remains to be done. This will establish what is already known so that the problem of contributing to existing knowledge can be addressed. This analysis has been divided into three main subjects that come together around the study of British crime cinema: genre, national cinema studies, and British crime film.

2.1 Genre in British cinema studies

Although the study of British cinema has involved genre films, or groups of films and individual movies approached using genre, there has been little of the revisionism that has typified the study of Hollywood cinema, such as Altman (1999) and Neale (2000). This is not surprising given the lack of genre theory that has drawn its case studies from British cinema. There is no great body of work to revise. As Burton and Petley observe, the impact of genre studies on British cinema history has been marginal (1998, p.3). Historically bounded terms and selected production contexts, such as Gainsborough melodrama, Ealing comedy, *Carry On*, Hammer horror, or James Bond have predominated. Burton and Petley, however, insist ‘that genre is granted its central place in British film culture’ because of its fundamental position in relation to production,

marketing and spectatorship (p.3). Their instinct is to advocate that genre criticism be applied to British cinema because of its relevance as a structuring mechanism within mainstream cinema.

The major study of British genres is Landy (1991). She establishes the centrality of genre by arguing that the 'British commercial cinema from the 1930s to the 1960s can be characterized as working within the genre system' (p.10). She identifies a cinema of 'dominant British genres' in order to 'to explore how they are instrumental in shaping the culture's conception of itself and not simply mirrors of external historical forces' (p.15). Her genres are chosen to demonstrate what she sees as the ideological function of generic cinema, the exposure of contradictions in personal and social experience (p.5). However, she does not choose the crime film as one of her dominant British genres.¹ Instead, as it is observed, Landy disperses them into other categories such as the tragic melodrama and the social problem film (Ryall, 1998, p.21). This contrasts markedly with genre criticism of the American cinema in which the gangster film and *film noir* are often used to define the crime film as an important element of national cinema, such as by Schatz (1981).

Landy's genres were usually drawn from criticism based around Hollywood examples, and then applied to the British context.² She argues that, although there were distinctive national cinemas, there was a mutual influence between American and British genres as part of a wider context of mass cultural genres (pp.483-484). It is curious, therefore, that she does not include a gangster or crime category. Can one

¹ Her eleven chosen genres were historical films, Empire, war and espionage films, the woman's film, tragic and family melodramas, film comedies, horror, science fiction and the social problem film.

² Her discussion of the social problem film, for example, is introduced with reference to Roffman, P. and Purdy, J. (1981). *The Hollywood Social Problem Film: Madness, Despair, and Politics from the Depression to the Fifties*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

assume, though, that such generic categories are transnational or do they need to be treated more as indigenous forms?

Questions of indigenous genres will be addressed in more detail later and in Chapter 3 in relation to the British crime film and genre, but these issues have been raised in studies of British genres. Hutchings (1993), for example, resolves the difficulty caused by transnational cultural modes of genre production of locating horror within a specifically national cinema by suggesting that rather than sharing generic identities with non-British forms, British horror films were 'constituted through a series of negotiations and differentiations, in effect through different interpretations of what horror actually is' at specific historical moments (p.19). Thus, he suggests, that horror films are generically transnational, but that they are always attempting to construct themselves in specific national contexts in relation to conceived norms, such as Universal's horror films of the 1930s and 1940s for Hammer in the 1950s. Pirie (1973), however, goes further by situating horror as Britain's key contribution to the international flow of genre cinema.

Studies of British genres such as these are typically concerned with the marginalized, 'unknown' British cinema and with questions of national cinema and representation. For instance, Hutchings finds that critical attitudes to horror films were 'overwhelmingly negative', such that they were seen as either 'a source of humour or as a cause for concern (1993, pp.4-9). The main focus of his study is with British national cinema. His aim was to 'explore the "Britishness" of British horror' (p.15). He accepted Gifford's trade and legal designations of British films and the importance of American-financed production in Britain that did not connect with 'a British context in any thematic or

stylistic way', but he was mainly interested in those films that had a 'propensity to address specifically national issues and concerns' (p.15).³ Hutchings' conclusion about the representational aspects of British postwar horror is that there was an aesthetic and ideological engagement between the creativity of film-makers and their need to respond to audiences. In the case of Hammer in the fifties, for example, he argues that there were two particular aspects of contemporaneous social reality, gender definition and changing notions of professionalism, that were woven 'into an aesthetic unity in the interests of making horror relevant to the British market' (p.21), and that this contrasts markedly with horror in the eighties, for instance, which did not locate itself very much in nationally specific issues and anxieties (p.187).

In contrast to Hutchings' aesthetic and ideological approach, Pirie (1973) locates films 'within a longstanding gothic tradition or as products of an individual director's vision' (Hutchings, 1993, p.12). Pirie makes a case for what he sees as the most neglected genre by giving it exalted status as Britain's only staple cinematic myth equivalent to the western in American cinema (1973, p.9). In the process, he is very dismissive of an equally unexplored, unmentioned and enduring cinematic tradition, the crime film, which belongs to an equally distinguished literary pedigree in Britain. He brushes aside Hammer's pre-horror, mainly crime second features, describing them as 'dreary B pictures' that imitated American formulae (p.19). These films remain to be rescued from their role as the meagre starter before the feast of horror films that followed.

³ Hutchings was willing to include Hollywood films that also had significant input or relevance, such as *Bride of Frankenstein* (1936).

As Chapman (1999) has observed, the beneficiaries of the concern for the neglected 'lost continent' of British cinema have been Hammer horror and Gainsborough melodrama because they have been valued for their transgressions of the dominant realist discourse or ideological norms (pp.11-12). Chapman's aim was to produce a cultural history of the James Bond films, which have not attracted the attention of this 'new revisionism' in film studies, because, he suggests, they were big budget, unfashionable, ideologically conservative and politically incorrect (pp.12-13). His study continues the trend of looking at British genres that were the product of specific companies, usually studio based, such as Hammer horror, Gainsborough melodrama, Ealing comedy or Rank's *Carry On* series. Films made in these contexts tend to have been constituted as belonging to their own genres, as Chapman does for 'The Bondian' style and formula (p.22), and one that like Ealing projected its own 'ideology of "Englishness" or "Britishness"' (p.63).

Genre films outside of these distinctive production company contexts, however, have received little attention in genre criticism. One notable exception is Harper (1994), which looks at the 'British historical film' of the thirties and forties. Typically again, genres are seen as being significant for their representational qualities, here in terms of a popular genre offering the 'reassurance of enforced class distinctions, or for explorations of more imaginative social and sexual relations' (p.188). More recently, also, a series on British popular genres has been launched, starting with science fiction (Hunter, 1999) and the first collection of essays on British crime cinema (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999), that intends to examine neglected areas of British film genres in relation to their ideas and representations of class and gender in postwar Britain. Hunter (1999), for instance, addresses the lack of critical discussion of British science fiction films and

concludes that they tended to be hybrid forms, frequently with horror (p.14), and in terms of their 'Britishness', that even where they were heavily influenced by American films, they were often British in their attitudes and themes (p.13).⁴

2.2 British national cinema studies

Recently, then, British cinema studies has been expanded to include series on previously neglected genres such as science fiction and crime, and directors who have made significant contributions to them, such as Lance Comfort (McFarlane, 2000) and Terence Fisher (Hutchings, 2002). However, the published history of British cinema has proceeded in three distinct ways. Firstly, there have been attempts to construct, usually, a chronological overview of cinema in Britain from its beginnings to the present day (Oakley, 1964; Betts, 1973; Perry, 1974; Armes, 1978; Street, 1997). Then there have been those books that have focused on specific periods, typically decades of cinema history (Low and Manvell, 1948; Low, 1949, 1950, 1971; Durgnat, 1970; Walker, A., 1974, 1985; Park, 1984; Richards, 1984, 1998b; Walker, J., 1985; Hill, 1986, 1999b; Friedman, 1993, Murphy, 1989, 1992, 2000; Geraghty, 2000). Lastly, there have been edited volumes of collected essays that have tried to synthesize scholarship at particular moments (Curran and Porter, 1983; Barr, 1986; Dixon, 1994, Higson, 1996a; Murphy, 1997; Ashby and Higson, 2000). What kind of cinema studies does this work represent, and how have genre and the crime film figured within it?

A decade ago it was observed that there were few histories of British cinema (Ryall, 1990), and whilst the literature in this area has expanded greatly, the same conclusion

⁴ British exploitation sf-horror of the eighties, for example, are seen to be 'strikingly British sf in their conservatism, thrilled disgust at female sexuality, and staunch but worried defence of the patriarchal order' (Hunter, 1999, p.13).

could still be drawn today. The few histories that have been published thus far provide evidence about the way that national cinema is conceived and what it means to study 'British cinema', how genre has figured in its conceptualization, and how one might start to study the British crime film.

British cinema is often conceived as being strikingly problematic. Betts, for instance, suggests that the national industry is not British because financially and culturally 'it has undergone a piratical process of Americanisation' (1973, p.11). Others have reacted as doctors delivering a bad diagnosis. For example, Perry regards British cinema as being sickly because it declined from its beginnings, its films were of poor quality, talent was unsupported, and the business was in constant crisis (1974, p.9). Similarly, Armes discovers a nasty ideological complaint, 'social conservatism and nostalgia' at the heart of British cinema (1978, pp.333-334). These perspectives, however, were drawn during the 1970s when British cinema was perceived to be in decline.

One might agree, though, that 'the history of British cinema is that of an inferiority complex' (Adair, 1985, p.14). Adair counters this consensus with a more optimistic 'history of *achievement*', but this was built on an equally negative conception of a very orthodox national cinema. Like Armes, he sees British cinema and society as characterised by a dominant ideological conservatism of consensual class relations, prissiness, gentility, conformism and blocked desire. Those who 'achieved', therefore, in this interpretation, were the maverick auteurs such as Hitchcock, Korda, Powell, Dickinson and Losey, who opposed dominant trends. Beyond this view, he only offers a very familiar historical territory of cinema that evinced 'tangible national characteristics' that ends in the seventies with the influx of foreign born directors,

Hollywood domination and adaptations of television sitcoms.⁵ Adair's 'British tradition' is the documentary movement, the war film of the Second World War, quality cinema of the 1940s, Ealing comedy, Hammer horror, the 'Free Cinema' movement, the 'Swinging Sixties' and the Bond film, but not crime films more generally.

The most recent attempt to provide a comprehensive, chronological overview of British cinema history is Street (1997). Although her study shares some of the preoccupations of earlier histories, such as Hollywood domination and the industry's weak production base, her scope is much wider. In particular, she questions the dominant ideological and consensual paradigm for the interpretation of British cinema. For instance, whilst she concedes that prior to the sixties the addressing of national identity was limited, she argues that this was never homogenously so, since there were a variety of styles and themes at this time, and in any case that the representational effect of national cinema is subject to the context of the audience's experience of being British.

Thus, although Street's book is yet another example of the persistent linking of national cinema and national identity in British cinema, her history marked a significant shift away from the preoccupation with auteurs or 'great men', towards other themes such as stardom, 'other' cinemas, and in particular, genre. Apart from Landy (1991), previous histories do not consider genres to be central characteristics of British cinema. In Betts' rather factual survey, for instance, genres are seen as the stock materials of commercial cinema, but only as secondary to individuals who make them. Thus, *The Third Man* (1949) is seen as a 'romantic thriller', but 'quintessentially Carol Reed in its

⁵ Interesting here is Adair's double standard in which certain foreign born directors are part of the 'British tradition' and others not. Losey, for example, 'was unquestionably *the* major creative figure in the British cinema from the mid-fifties to the early seventies' (Adair, 1985, p.68).

unity of style' (1973, pp.240-241). Similarly, Perry considers most genre films to be conventional and unremarkable, unless altered by auteurs. He rated *Blind Date* (1959) as an 'ordinary suspense thriller' transformed by Losey into a 'study of transient feelings and police corruptibility' (1974, p.198).

For Armes, also, genres are merely frameworks for creativity. In the British context, however, he concludes that genres were 'lifeless and transient', so that film-makers were denied the conditions for creativity to thrive, and the culture did not encourage convention breaking (1978, p.3). Again, only gifted individuals such as Losey could make genre pictures seem in any way significant. Thus, *The Criminal* (1960), a 'routine gangster melodrama', became a study of 'power and money, codes of conduct and routines of behaviour' (p.28). As Chapter 8 reveals, Armes is perfectly accurate about Losey's film, but he is mistaken to think that only auteurs make genre films meaningful.

Street's conception of national cinema, however, reversed the earlier emphasis on auteurs over genres, but it relies on a synthesis of existing scholarship on British genres largely concerned with questions of ideological representation. She assumes that British cinema 'has a strong generic base', whilst admitting an absence of 'detailed research' (1997, p.28). With the Hollywood model in mind, she asks to 'what extent can British film-making be described as a variation on the studio system with its own genres?' (p.29). For the 1930s, she identifies 'dominant' genres such as historical/costume, empire, comedy, musicals (musical comedies) and melodramas, and during the war, war films. In the postwar period, despite an 'eclectic base', she advances a 'number of key genres' (p.61); comedy, 'spiv' cycle, British film noirs, war films, 'films using a Cold War backdrop', science-fiction, Hammer horror, social problem films, and later -

‘kitchen-sink cycle’, ‘New Wave films’, pop musicals, *Carry Ons*, James Bond cycle, and Swinging London films. Thus, her conception of genre is very fluid, ranging from ‘fixed’ categories such as comedy, to themes, movements, studio productions and cycles.

In the search for British genres, she does attempt to find core generic categories by linking, for example, post-war social problem films to the later social realism of the New Wave, but her theoretical conception of indigenous genres is never made explicit. However, the crime genre features in her history, but only sporadically; the spiv cycle in the forties, British film noir in the forties and fifties, and four general categories of ‘crime/thriller films’ in the seventies - British gangsterdom, police films, Agatha Christie adaptations, and spy thrillers/James Bond (pp.71-102). Again, these are quite diverse generic groupings offering a selective account of genres involving criminal activities. Her focus is upon indigenous, ‘dominant’ genres that are seen to address national image, identity and community, as part of a hegemonic process involving the representation of consensus or its contradictions.

Another approach to British cinema history is achieved through focusing on specific historical periods, typically decades. How has genre, the crime film and national cinema figured in these histories? A significant change can be seen between two studies on the 1930s, between Richards (1984) and Richards (1998b). In the earlier history, genres are not seen as being interesting in themselves, but in the later one genres have become inherently more significant and central. In Richards (1984), genre films are regarded as being part of cinema’s mass cultural role to generate ideological consensus, to enforce social norms through the ‘images of society presented in the films themselves’ (p.9).

However, in Richards (1998b), genres such as musicals, society melodramas and crime thrillers (Chapman, 1998), along with audience tastes and minor studios, are foregrounded in the continuing recovery of neglected areas, the charting of the 'new map of British cinema in this decade' (Richards, 1998b, p.vii).

Richards' conclusion about the revisionism of this collection of essays included the suggestion that quota films did not necessarily lack quality and that films at this time were part of an important wider intertextual cultural scene linking film with popular fictions, the music industry and the stage. These are hardly revolutionary findings, but the book did add to the body of work providing evidence about the place of melodrama in British cinema (Dyer, 1961; Williams, 1983; Higson and Neale, 1984; Petley, 1986; Murphy, 1989; Landy, 1991, 1997 McFarlane, 1994; King, 1996; Conrich, 1997, Aldgate, 1998; Richards, 1998a; Geraghty, 2000) that so far has received no comprehensive assessment. Richards concludes that melodrama 'should be seen as a continuing and significant strand in British film culture' (p.ix).

That British cinema is not discussed in terms of melodrama more often is surprising. The observation has often been made, but rarely followed through. Addressing the misrecognition of forties realism, for instance, Murphy (1989) suggests that most films in that period were not realist films, but belong 'more properly to a rich tradition of melodrama' (p.2). Murphy organizes the postwar films of the late forties not in genres, but in cycles. He includes two crime categories, 'British gangster films' and 'morbid thrillers', along with costume pictures, contemporary melodramas and comedies. When he considered sixties British cinema (1992), this time to look at the marginalization of non-realist cinema, however, he discusses the films in the context of genres, of which he

identifies three key examples; horror, crime and comedy. These are the only times that the crime film has been given a central place in this periodization of British cinema history.

One of the problems that Murphy faced in looking at the sixties was to do with conceptions of national cinema given the extensive reliance on American finance in the British film industry at this time. Murphy wanted to be as comprehensive as possible, but felt compelled to be selective. For economic definitions of British films he uses Gifford (1986), but culturally he chooses those films that he regards as having 'integral British social themes' (1992, p.7), that allows him to include some Hollywood films and exclude some registered British films.⁶ This specific debate is addressed in Chapter 5 in relation to the quantification of the British crime film in its institutional context.

Durnat (1970), Hill (1986) and Geraghty (2000) have studied the fifties, respectively in terms of themes, ideology and sociology. Durnat takes a thematic approach to films between 1945 and 1958. He also emphasizes a cultural definition to British film by his concern for films that he feels to be about Britain or British attitudes (1970, p1). Thematically, Durnat is particularly interested in class. He regards British cinema in this period as being dominated by the middle-class concerns of film-makers (p.8). The class-based nature of British cinema allows him to conclude that in comparison to modes of film-making in America, British films were less melodramatic than American ones because they were less violent, more morally ambiguous, and less

⁶ By the time that Murphy had turned to an edited volume on British cinema in the 90s (2000), the growing internationalisation of film capital had convinced him that economic definitions of British films were less interesting than cultural representations of Britain (p.xi). Thus, the study of British cinema potentially becomes limited only to those films that seem distinctively British in terms of treatment or theme, regardless of their economic origins.

sentimental and escapist (p.6). On the whole, however, he is more interested in how individual films treated themes that cut across genres or cycles.

Hill (1986) also takes an ideological approach to the period 1956-1963, though in contrast to Durnat, he argues that film texts do play an important part in the construction of attitudes and values as part of a wider social context (p.179). Hill's generic categories, such as 'new wave' working-class realism or the social problem film, are wide ranging critical constructs. He has been particularly concerned about the text-context problematic which he maintains is resolved by the concept of ideology, enabling films to be placed in their social and economic context of production without recourse to a straightforward 'dominant ideology thesis' (pp.177-178). This approach, he insists, prevents the analysis of texts and contexts from being kept distinct (1999, p.xi), an issue that will be looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

Geraghty (2000) uses thematics, particularly of modernity and gender within a sociological context. Her study has three important aspects. Firstly, although she did not intend to produce a survey of the fifties, she does not ignore 'B' films, so that her scope extends beyond the usual first features, as Murphy has done for the sixties (1992), and only McFarlane has done elsewhere (1994; 1996). Secondly, she joins the critique of the realism-fantasy dichotomy made by Lovell (1997), to be discussed below, for instance through her suggestion that Ealing melodramas share textually the same elements as Gainsborough ones, but in more realist contexts (Geraghty, 2000, pp.76-79). Lastly, she focuses part of her analysis around case studies of what she describes as the two most popular genres of the fifties, war films and comedies. Responding to the tendency in recent work on British cinema to see this as a period of crisis for masculinity (Landy,

1991; Street, 1997; Chibnall, 1999; Clay 1999), she argues that this has ‘over-emphasised the themes of general male anxiety and crisis in British films of the period’ (2000, p.178). She suggests, for example, that war and comedy films were generally socially conservative genres containing mild rebellion and reassuring gender and class hierarchies (p.195).

In the periodization approach to British cinema history, then, genres including the crime film have figured, particularly for the period from the forties to the sixties. But, in no period, apart from the forties, which has received much attention in academic scholarship more generally, can the knowledge of British genre films be regarded as anywhere near comprehensive, especially since ideological or cultural political approaches to the study of representations in films has predominated, and has typified accounts of more recent cinema of the eighties and nineties (Friedman, 1993; Hill, 1999b; Murphy, 2000).

Edited collections of essays on British cinema illustrate how the discipline has developed over the last twenty years, showing the changing conceptions of national cinema and genre within it. The crime film, again, has only a marginal presence in these projects. The first collection, by Curran and Porter (1983), is organized around themes of ‘process’ (the institutional context of industry, policy and organisation of film practice) and ‘product’. Here the contributors consider the ideological and cultural significance of movements and genres that would become very familiar territory in British cinema studies, such as woman’s pictures of the forties, Ealing comedy, ‘new wave’, *Carry On* or imperial films of the thirties. The next volume, Barr (1986), introduces the issue of diversity by reference to ‘strands’ running through British

cinema history. The 'core' of the book is about the connection between cinema and other media, such as theatre and broadcasting, so that it is more about modes of presentation than genres, but it made a significant contribution to the debate about what was known about British cinema.

Barr's introduction uses an analogy of exploration, of looking for gaps in the 'charts that have been conveniently drawn' (1986, p.15). This is echoed by the conception of a 'lost continent' of 'fantasy' films that had been suppressed or ignored by the dominant critical discourse of realism (Petley, 1986). The problem, Petley suggests, is not simply to rediscover these films, but to redefine them (p.109), for instance, as genre films such as 'films noir'. This was, then, a crucial intervention in the historiography of British cinema. However, this project was still framed by the idea that such genres were part of a 'repressed underlife that sporadically flares up' (p.117), rather than, for example, being part of a mainstream commercial cinema that had just been wrongly conceived in the first place. Thus, the editor prefaces Murphy's 'spiv cycle' of crime films as belonging to 'divergent strands', but they were integral products of the system that produced the valorised realist classics.⁷

Dixon's anthology (1994) continues the idea of uncovering a more accurate description of national cinema, although this time with an archaeological analogy of being the latest in a series of uncovering 'layers' of critical discourse (p.4). In this case, the concern is once more with critically ignored or marginalized texts and authors. The book advocates a methodology of 'new critical historicism', where through textual reinterpretation of canonical films, or new interpretations of excluded ones, it is possible

⁷ Peter Hutchings makes a similar response to the 'lost continent' idea by making a claim that the British horror film was part of the mainstream of production and not merely about revealing 'what is unsaid or repressed elsewhere' (1993, p.14).

to reveal sites of ideological critique, rupture or transgression. In this cultural studies context, genres are only significant in the way that they bear class ideology (Rattigan, 1994), or else their conventions are worked upon by the personal concerns of authors (McFarlane, 1994; Merz, 1994). McFarlane, for instance, introduced the 'B' film into British cinema history. He sees the British program feature film as a particularly melodramatic form, but he accounts for this in the personal tastes of the film-makers, rather than as a defining characteristic of genre cinema in Britain. Typically, he is less concerned with the conventions of melodrama than the way that directors add to, or subvert generic expectations.

The next attempt to synthesize British cinema research was Higson (1996a). Once more, the emphasis is around the notion of a central core of 'quality realist film', but with a concern for marginal areas, particularly from the point-of-view of class perspectives and the gendering of culture. In contrast to Dixon's earlier volume, however, the book is more about 'efforts to construct an indigenous cinema', and as much about critical debates as the films themselves (pp.2-3). Familiar topics, such as documentary, Gainsborough melodrama, and the 'New Wave' are included, and as in Street (1997), so are more diverse traditions such as art and black British cinemas, but not crime films because at that time the genre was not considered to be one that contributed to or opposed British realism in any significant way.

Contributors to this volume are mainly concerned with the ideological discourses of genres or cycles of films, particularly with reference to class, gender, sexuality and national identity. However, essays by King (1996) and Higson (1996b) are significant for the way in which they problematize the study of British genre films, whilst still

being concerned with questions of class and gender representations. For instance, both authors acknowledged the problem of hybridity when attempts are made to label films using critical categories. They also consider whether or not films that can be grouped as a 'cycle' can also be related to films from other periods in a generic tradition. In relation to methodology, this raises the issue of diachronic and synchronic approaches to film genres, the extent to which films can be categorized over considerable periods of time, or in shorter, more historically specific moments in time.⁸ For example, King looks at five 'woman's films' from the 1980s and places them in a traditional generic idiom extending backwards to *Millions Like Us* (1943) and forwards to *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993).⁹

King's concept of a tradition enabled her to think about how cycles differ from other versions and so assess their specific historical configurations. Predominantly, with the influence of cultural studies, textual analysis of British genre films has been used conventionally as evidence of a film's ideological operations, how the film might be 'read' or understood. It is here that critics are vulnerable to accusations of misrecognition of generic identity, or imposing their own critical categories on films. Whilst Higson's qualification of textual determinism is the polysemic nature of reception, he is still prepared to argue that empirical evidence about the contextual discourses surrounding a film's release can confirm a film's generic identity in the critic's favour (Higson, 1996b), in this instance that films such as *Howard's End* (1992) are 'heritage films' more than they are costume melodramas. However, these debates,

⁸ For a discussion of diachronic and synchronic approaches to British genres see Porter (1998).

⁹ The films were *Shirley Valentine* (1989), *Educating Rita* (1983), *Wish You Were Here* (1987), *Letter to Brezhnev* (1985), and *She'll Be Wearing Pink Pyjamas* (1985), comedies that can also be regarded as melodrama. King is keen to revise the conception of British cinema under the dominant realist discourse which selectively 'failed to take account of British cinema's sustained investment in melodramatic emotionality' (1996, p.219).

which illustrate some of the problems that can be encountered when trying to use critical categories such as genre, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Murphy (1997) does not continue the debate about British genres, but the volume acknowledges the growing interest in them. For example, Landy (1997) uses the conventional approach to genres as sets of ideological texts depicting historically specific representations (of gender). Harper (1997), too, is concerned with expressions of social change, but more typically her contribution is interested in indigenous forms and traditions. For instance, Harper differentiates between American 'British' and British costume/historical films, not only by their context of production, but also by their different representations of class and gender.¹⁰

Similarly, Napper (1997) analyses the 'sedate English country house detective stories' of quota production in the 1930s. He concludes, relying on a straightforward reading of the texts, that the crime dramas made at Twickenham in the early thirties reaffirmed an upper-class world threatened by destruction (p.44). Additionally, using Gifford (1986) as his source, he shows that quantitatively the two most significant genres of the decade were the comedy and crime picture (p.41). Ryall echoes this (1986, p.73; 1997, p.31). He has established that production schedules in the thirties were dominated by comedies, musicals and crime films, and suggests that there is an indigenous popular cultural tradition that 'focused on crime, fantasy and horror' (1997, p.34). In the postwar period this tradition is recognised as continuing by Dacre (1997) for comedy, Conrich (1997) for horror, but only covered for the late forties by Durgnat (1997) for crime.

¹⁰ Harper argues that British costume/historical films of the 1950s showed a conservative response to meritocratic Britain, whereas American producers, less interested in class, made films demonstrating 'the threnody of an unambiguous and energetic masculinity' (1997, p.141).

Murphy's volume, however, also addresses ways of conceptualizing British cinema in terms of more fundamental structures. Lovell (1997) returns to the realism-anti-realism, restraint-excess dualism that had dominated critical discourses about British cinema. His interpretation is that these tendencies were not opposed, but interactive forces that made British cinema distinctive. In terms of genre, therefore, one might contend that British genres are distinctive in the way that they are hybrid forms of social realism and more fantastic modes, more interactive strands (Barr, 1986) than 'continents' of realism and fantasy (Petley, 1986).

Lovell also questions the persistent linking of British film production with images of national identity, which he finds odd (1997, p.241). His intervention is significant because, as he argues rightly, films contribute to a nation's conception of itself, but in British cinema studies it has been assumed that 'cinema is the key tool for the construction of British national identity' (p.241). If a study of British films has to be concerned with questions of national cinema and identity there is the possibility that this will be at the expense of other significant aspects that films might address.

The latest collection of papers on British cinema, Ashby and Higson (2000), is very much a 'taking stock' of the academic discipline so far, and it has continued the centrality of concerns for the 'national' dimension of British cinema. The editors observe that the major debates in film studies have been 'rehearsed using American cinema as the model', apart from 'national cinema' which has been the particular approach to British cinema (p.14). They suggest, therefore, that critical approaches to British cinema have been characterized more by pragmatic applications of methodology.

This is particularly accurate in relation to the volume's section on genres, movements, and cycles, where the authors do not consider the application of genre criticism in the British context, but reconsider very familiar generic areas such as documentary realism, the New Wave, and 'Swinging London' films, although not all the conference papers in this area were available for publication. This is in contrast to the section on authorship, where the traditional recovery or creation of new auteurs is replaced by an emphasis on individual 'agency' as a 'negotiation between different forces in cultural production' (p.7). However, no equivalent revision of theory and criticism is applied to the concept of genre.

Ashby and Higson also identify a dominant approach which they call 'British Cinema Studies', characterized by the convergence of film studies and cinema history, a form of historical, cultural studies in which empiricism and the speculation of interpretation are interdependent (p.12-13). There are two chapters in their volume, by Richards (2000) and Higson (2000), which address this discipline. They serve usefully to summarize the way that national cinema and identity have figured in it, and the methodological problems that are raised within it.

The main difference between the two assessments of national cinema studies is that Richards' is decidedly 'upbeat', whereas Higson's is tentative and doubtful. Richards calls for a constructive dialogue between different approaches. In effect, he wants to create a 'finest hour' of intellectual activity, a plural critical community assembled to appreciate the 'richness and complexity of British cinema' (2000, p.31). However, his 'rethinking' does not extend to his own unproblematic, hegemonic conception of national cinema. As an empirical historian, his methodology of relating social context to

textual analysis is perfectly valid. But, he is tied to the belief that the period running from the twenties to the sixties is special because, in his view, the cinema 'was a mass medium aiming to reach a cross-class, all-age audience', and therefore, 'an indicator of the national preoccupations in the round' (p.23). There is no 'dialogue' here with other approaches, such as postmodernism's critique of 'Grand Narratives' where a 'more sophisticated understanding of *domination* as a process must begin with the rejection of the monolithic category of "the dominant"' (Collins, 1989, p.xiv).¹¹

In contrast, Higson is more revisionist, but he tries hard to maintain the link between national identity and national cinema studies, even though he acknowledges the difficulty of distinguishing the indigenous cultural tradition. He simply substitutes one conceptual framework for another. Rather than examining why 'British films' have to be explained or accounted for in terms of identity formation, he re-thinks the nature of identity to discover 'where meaning lies' (2000, p.45). Inevitably, this leads him to questions of interpretation and audience reception, to establish what kind of cinema operates in nation states. The search for the 'true' nature of British cinema becomes as elusive as the liminal (Cook, 1996, p.40) or 'border-crossing' (Higson, 2000, p.40) nature of identity formation itself.

Thus, although there might appear to be a cosy convergence of British cinema studies, Richards and Higson attribute quite opposing significance to the same texts of British national cinema. For instance, the casting of Ealing cinema as projecting Britain (Barr, 1977), which became influential in creating a core identity for British cinema in critical discourses, is challenged by inserting new films or re-reading existing ones in

¹¹ Hill (1992) has provided a useful summary of reasons for the decline in interest in the 'dominant ideology thesis' and its impact, such as the emphasis on audience studies in media studies (pp.11-13).

accordance with a more complex conceptualization of national identity. Consequently, 'films that were once seen as constructing a familiar consensus, imagining the nation as a solid, stable, centred space and people, now seem to express the contingency and fragility of the national, and the fractured and shifting nature of identity' (Higson, 2000, p.45).

Where, then, does this leave the study of British cinema when for some academics this is a problematic enquiry, and yet for others it remains relatively straightforward? Richards, for instance, suggests that a nation's self-image, disseminated through the mass media, is its national identity (1997, p.2). His argument is that people belonging to nations have characteristics that can become mythologized in culture, presenting images of national identity that feed back into how society develops, thinks, behaves and exists. Through myths, the continual exposure to images of Britishness provokes a 'corresponding reality' (p.17). This conception of national identity is a little straightforward, and, furthermore, his construction of national identity is highly selective. In particular, he aligns British identity with his own desirable qualities of Britishness: tolerance, compromise, law-abidingness, duty, service, sense of humour, emotional restraint, resolve, gentlemanliness, courage and respectability.

A key moment in Richards' interpretation of history becomes the 1950s and 1960s, a period he suggests is notable for its unravelling of these national characteristics under the onslaught of affluence and materialism (p.18), and film is a scapegoat:

Instead of modelling themselves on such graceful and stylish gentlemen heroes as Ronald Colman and Leslie Howard, today's young Britons choose as their cinematic role models the muscle-bound thugs Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone. (pp.20-21).

Richards' concept of a consensual Britain is founded on a notion of dominant and alternative images of national identity and foreign influences, and this has particular significance for the way that he positions the British crime film, as will be established later.

More typical of film studies in recent years, however, has been the desire to rethink the issue of British national cinema in relation to the importance of Hollywood films for British audiences and to raise the question of what is a British film? (Street, 1997, pp.14-15). An important strand in the academy of the last twenty years has been the deconstruction of national cinema and 'Britishness' (Higson, 1998), but the reconstruction is a problematic endeavour (Cook, 1996). Fundamentally, Cook argues that attempts to fix the identity of an indigenous British cinema are as doomed as the quest for an authentic national identity, given the elusiveness of determining the authenticity of national cultures and their people, and the flux of identity formation itself (p.2).

Cook's study of '40s costume romances' attempts to open up the conception of British cinema to hybridity with an emphasis on audience reception and gender identities. She argues that a consequence of British cinema's core identity in 'popular imagination', of a valuable realist aesthetic typified by Ealing cinema, perpetuates a consensus view of a cinema dominated by 'restraint and repression'. She is particularly concerned to move away from the core identity paradigm of British cinema history that focuses too much on debates around the construction of national identity and the struggles of the forties to establish a consensus on how national cinema should be constituted (p.5). The essential question one can take from her revisionism is how to reconfigure British cinema as a more complex mainstream beyond the dichotomies of

quality and disreputable, realism and tinsel, centre and margins, or establishment and 'repressed underground'.

The work of Higson (1995) is a good example of the problems that can be encountered by the attempt to construct an indigenous national cinema, and in particular, how the 'consensus' films of the 1940s have been used to establish the distinctiveness of British cinema. At the centre of his enquiry into film and national character he places the concept of genre because

One of the most productive ways of exploring national cinema from this perspective is in terms of genre analysis, for the processes of repetition and reiteration which constitute a genre can be highly productive in sustaining a cultural identity. (p.5).

He identifies, for example, the 'melodrama of everyday life', exemplified by films such as *Millions Like Us* (1943) and *This Happy Breed* (1944), as a relatively distinctive British film genre (p.262) that is restrained and consensual in its presentation of the 'family-community-nation'. This image, he maintains, is so strong in the forties, that it became a generic convention, but one that by the end of that decade had become increasingly difficult to represent. In other words, the postwar consensus unravels with the intrusion into British films of violence or eroticism in the late forties, and transgressions by central protagonists in the late fifties and sixties, including criminals and criminality. Individualism invades the community, 'private personal experience' overtakes the 'common public sphere'.

The problem here is the attempt to link British genres to notions of national identity. His desire to attribute or shackle generic textual characteristics to an authentic national identity based on consensual images of the nation within a specific historical period,

which becomes the core of British genres, is short of the complexity and hybridity called for by Cook, and later by Higson (2000) himself. One might conclude, therefore, that other generic forms, such as those that imitate Hollywood traditions or are hybrid between the two, are less relevant to constructions of national identity than more purely indigenous forms. Primary interest, then, becomes those films that are seen as being distinctively British, testifying to the national character and presenting images of the nation at specific moments in history. This would tend to produce a highly selective history of films made in Britain obsessed with the issue of national identity.

National cinema is, as Higson himself recognises, 'a profoundly complex issue' (1995, p.278), that can include not only texts made in the national territory, but all films in circulation there, and film culture as a whole (Higson, 1989). It is therefore a subject with tremendous scope and numerous factors (Crofts, 1998) - films in the context of their production, distribution and exhibition, audiences for texts, discourses about films, the textuality of films, national, cultural, social, and international specificity of films and infrastructures (including the role of the state), the flow of texts between countries (including British films that circulate outside of Britain), and the circulation of texts in time, through re-issue, rediscovery or appropriation in later historical periods.

Nowell-Smith (1985) asks the question 'what is British cinema?'. He draws a distinction between 'British films' and 'cinema in Britain' to differentiate between cinema culture generally in terms of films, places and people, and the qualities of national texts. He concludes that films 'made in Britain' do not necessarily qualify. British films, he argues, require British input of finance, labour, and 'something which establishes these films as meaningfully British' (p.149). This is the kind of narrow

nationalism that reduces British cinema to those films that seem to be contributing overtly to images of British society. Why can't 'made in Britain' be qualification enough for a film to be considered as part of British cinema or to be seen as having some kind of significance in a British context?

Hill (1992) makes a similar distinction between British national cinema (British films) and 'cinema in Britain'. He considers economic and cultural aspects of national cinema. Economically, what counts as a British film, he suggests, is made problematic by 'transnational communication industries' (p.10). Cultural factors would centre on the recognition of indigenous forms by critics and audiences. Hill acknowledges that conceptions of nation, national identity and nationalism are dynamic constructions, subject to historical change, hybrid and contested and challenged, but attempts to align the national cinema with films that have 'national preoccupations' or make 'valuable contributions to British cultural life'. But how can this be determined, and to what kind of cinema, therefore, do films that do not do this belong? Where can one place films that don't address national identity, when, as Hill recognises, films respond to perceived demands rather than address questions of British cultural life (p.17)?

Higson's call to consider the site of consumption as much as the site of production, so that Hollywood films would also be included in British national cinema (1989, p.36), is not a solution that Hill favours. Hill argues that this blurs the distinction between 'cinema in Britain' and 'British national cinema' (1992, p.14). Cook's critique of the attempts to construct a fixed identity of indigenous British cinema is relevant here. The critic/reader/viewer is constantly involved in the process of constructing their own identity and that of the place where they were born or reside through the consumption of

films that may or may not qualify economically or culturally as 'national cinema'. In this sense, to study the 'British crime film' or any British genre is far from straightforward.

'National cinema', then, has been a significant preoccupation in British cinema studies, with, in particular, a concern for the representation of national identity. Within this, genre criticism has been dominated by ideological questions typically focused around representations of class and gender, or with genres linked to serial production of the major studios. National cinema, however, is a complex issue made problematic by the desire to avoid homogenizing conceptions of (national) identity and the privileging of the moment of reception in response to critiques of the 'dominant ideology thesis'. The nationality of films is also not straightforward. Economic and cultural definitions are reliable indicators about a film's own national identity, but the parameters have proved to be sufficiently controversial to force academics to defend their chosen field of national cinema. Furthermore, the study of the indigenous qualities of British cinema has to acknowledge the transnational qualities of mass cultural genres, particularly given the pervasive influence of American films and finance in Britain. How, for instance, British crime films have developed by distinction to, or in imitation of, Hollywood genres, is an interesting enquiry that is perhaps more straightforward when referring to British *film noir*, but more problematic in relation to the melodramatic mode or the thriller genre.

2.3 British crime film

Having established the general absence of the crime film from British cinema studies, then, it now remains to discuss the specific presence of literature on this subject. One

reason for the crime film's marginalization in British cinema studies has been the tendency to see it as being part of an alternative British identity implicated in the breakdown of postwar consensus. As was established earlier, Richards is not receptive to the crime film's qualities because he holds it partly responsible for undermining social cohesion over the last thirty years. For example, he cites the subversive hedonism of 1960s caper films, with their philosophy of 'immediate gratification, individualism and self-assertion' (1997, p.165), for the subversion of the previous value-system and for belonging to a number of genres and forms whose ideologies of individualism helped to 'plunge the nation into the abyss of Thatcherism' (p.168). His pessimistic narrative ends with the condemnation of 'violent chic' and the 'sickening and pointless *Reservoir Dogs* (1991)' (p.171). Crime films, then, for him, are examples of an 'alternative national image', 'the cinema's criminal alternative to decent English humanity' (p.146). In effect, as a self-appointed arbiter of mainstream and alternative Englishness, Richards banishes dissent in the manner of a puritan father scolding his wayward children.

These prejudices are also to the fore in his study of the representation of the police in postwar British cinema (1999). He argues that in the 1960s and 1970s, with one or two exceptions, television took over from cinema for the depiction of the police, and that in contrast to the 1950s, the cinema became more criminal-centred and the police became more peripheral (pp.145-146). This was because, he suggests, the cinema had declined as a national, hegemonic institution, that it reflected 'the way in which cinema was moving from a conformist to an oppositional stance, from a national to a sectional medium, pitched at the under-30s' (p.145). Generally, this has some accuracy, as will be demonstrated in Chapters 7 and 8, but he ignores criminal-centred films of the fifties,

and dismisses those of the sixties and seventies by negatively claiming that their principal features were the 'planning and execution of robberies, the psychology and interplay of criminals and the buzz of violence' (p.146).¹² This relies on an extremely simplistic conception of audiences and popular cultural forms, in which cinematic villains are imbued with oppositional values aimed at youth culture, and televisual police heroes appeal to the conformist majority culture.

Similarly, Higson (1995) positions criminality in films in relation to the breakdown in consensus. Higson sees the intrusion of crime in films such as *It Always Rains on Sunday* (1947) and *The Blue Lamp* (1950), as an indication of anxieties about 'secure social cohesion or moral and political consensus' (p.269). He creates a 'grand narrative' of generic and social change by highlighting the social realist tradition of his 'melodrama of everyday life'. Thus, he jumps to the New Wave films in which the community had become the backdrop, or even threatened the petty criminal hero as in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962). This is a very selective view that does not acknowledge that popular culture, even when subjected to the forces of conformity and consensus, is a 'fundamentally conflicted terrain' of competing aesthetic discourses in search of audiences by promoting themselves as privileged modes of representing experience (Collins, 1989, p.2-7).

Other conceptions of national cinema, however, have not promoted the crime film as a form implicated in the fragmentation of consensus. *A Mirror For England* is Durgnat's thematic survey that offers a more pluralistic account of class alliances, resentments and celebrations that characterize the reconstruction of national identities

¹² The examples he cites were *The Criminal* (1960), *Payroll* (1961), *The Frightened City* (1961), *A Prize of Arms* (1962), *West 11* (1963), *Night Must Fall* (1963), *He Who Rides the [sic] Tiger* (1963), *Robbery* (1967), *The Italian Job* (1969), *Get Carter* (1970) and *Villain* (1971).

between 1946 and 1958. His attention is directed to a number of largely 'A' crime films, such as *Never Let Go* (1960), 'a middle-class "Bicycle Thieves" inspirational and melodramatic' (p.42), or *The Intruder* (1953), which 'ventures to transpose military paternalism into civilian life' (p.52), and so on. His more recent study (1997), however, uses a more generic context for the period 1945-1949. As usual it consists of thematically organized ad hoc groupings that are thought provoking, but elliptical. Once more he explores the ideological class conflicts and comparisons with American counterparts:

Whereas Hollywood noir between 1945 and 1949 is driven by an optimism/cynicism split, the British mood owes more to a more gradual, uneasy shift of the balance between older, more traditional suspicions about human nature and more modern, lenient attitudes, spreading fastest among the middle classes, some of whom regarded Victorian harshness as a main cause of evil. (1997, p.91).

Durgnat recognises some of the thematic and aesthetic diversity present in the crime film at this time that needs to be addressed more thoroughly throughout the postwar period and before.

Robert Murphy, more than anyone, acknowledges the crime film as a significant cycle or genre of the late 40s and 60s (1986; 1989; 1992). However, his concerns are not typical national cinema ones, other than in addressing the exclusion of popular genres from the realist orthodoxy, but typically he does not show any great concern for genre theory and the crime film beyond a brief reference to narrative patterns (1992, p.217). Instead his approach is to conflate historical context with aesthetic appreciation. In terms of the presentation of professional criminality, for instance, his preferred mode has been realism, in terms of the crime film's fidelity to the real underworld and the use of 'appropriate' expressionist styles such as *film noir*.

In respect of realism, for instance, *The Criminal* 'is distinguished by its well-informed view of the underworld' (p.204), and *The Informers* (1963) has 'convincing underworld characters' (p.210). *Brighton Rock* (1947), however, solicits a more ambivalent response, since it was regarded as being a too realistic interpretation of the novel's symbolism (1986, p.300), but with a 'vividly realized' underworld setting (1989, p.158). In relation to appropriate styles of presentation for this kind of subject matter, Murphy also favours the harder edge of *noir* or other modes that could capture his perception of a dangerous British underworld. Thus, *The Green Cockatoo* (1937) is seen to have had its Americanized underworld reduced to a 'conventional crime melodrama' because of censorship restrictions (1986, p.288), *Good Time Girl* (1948) has a 'harsh, cold, dangerous world' (1989, p.159), and *Hell is a City* (1960) has its Manchester Streets that 'seem as exciting and dangerous as New York' (p.158).

In particular he concentrates on representations of the underworld in film that have stretched from 'low-life movies' of the late 1930s adapted from working-class novelists such as James Curtis, for example *There Ain't No Justice* (1939), passing to the cycle of 'spiv films' of the late 1940s, such as *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947), and culminating in the 'less reverential' films of the late 1950s and early 1960s, first features such as *Hell is a City* and *The Criminal*, and B films such as *Naked Fury* (1959) and *Jungle Street* (1961). Murphy's tastes, however, tend to discriminate in favour of films within the field and exclude others from it. Typical dismissals include, *Night Beat* (1947), 'a disappointingly shabby affair' (1989, p.160), mid-1960s 'vacuous internationalism' (1992, p.217) and 'tepid caper movies' (p.217). In effect, he has created a taste culture of highlighted 'low-lifers'.

Murphy's 'history of the underworld film', then, is a mixture of disappointments interspersed by those 'better' films that deal with the reality of professional crime or present a less comfortable view of the underworld or a less flattering one of the police. He values the late 1930s' trend towards showing the 'underside of British society' that was starting to overcome the restraints of censorship, but then this is interrupted by the war (1986, p.291). The 'spiv cycle' is thereafter seen as a welcome return to a cinema tied to the representation of contemporary reality. Since the crime film was relegated to the second feature in the 1950s, his interest in that decade is limited. For him, the 1950s is by comparison a disappointingly orthodox decade in which the first features 'celebrated the integrity and heroism of the police' (1992, p.202), but the 'gloom' is eventually lifted by the aforementioned films of the late fifties. As a survey, therefore, these studies offer only a partial explanation informed by value judgements tied to notions of realism.

Taste cultures within film studies are inevitably governed by intellectual and aesthetic choices. They create canons by making decisions about which films to write about and what they want to say about them. The political significance of these operations is the way that they 'empower a certain critic of a certain cinema' (Sconce, 1995, p.392) through a traditionally unchallenged legitimacy. Murphy is not alone in this particular taste culture that has valued melodrama tempered with a convincing realism. Peter Dyer (1961), for example, on the occasion of a season of 'pre-war British thrillers' at the National Film Theatre was chiefly impressed by either crime melodramas such as *They Drive By Night* (1938) that seemed to use authentic backgrounds, or the quality melodrama of auteurs such as Hitchcock. More recently, Wollen (1998), taking his cue from Lovell's notion that the best British films achieve a

fusion of realism and melodrama (1986), redirects discussion of British cinema to questions of aesthetics, and in particular aesthetic appreciation of canonical films. He concludes that there is already too much about studios, genres, periods, and representations of gender and national identity, and not enough about aesthetics (Wollen, 1998, p.22).

His case study is the 'spiv cycle', which he claims should have a 'key place in the pantheon of British cinema' (p22). This is because of the cycle's perceived origins in realist discourses about contemporaneous criminal activities in the black market economy and the way that they feel 'very British' in setting, attitudes and style through a localised *noir* world:

The endings of the spiv films are often where melodrama decisively triumphs over realism, where British cinema unashamedly enters the eerie and fascinating realm of *noir*, the world of violence, darkness and death that Hollywood exploited so memorably at the same time. (p.22).

Academic and non-academic audiences are involved in making aesthetic judgments about films as part of their cultural use of cinema, and clearly this is an important aspect of film culture that can get overlooked in British cinema studies. The taste culture represented by Murphy, Dyer and Wollen is a pervasive construction of an ideal British film aesthetic that points to the forties as being a true 'golden age' of British cinema. Evidence of this is provided by the British Film Institute's survey of 'top 100 culturally British' films that took place in 1999 and in which the 'spiv film' *The Third Man* (1949) achieved first place and four other films of the 1940s were in the top ten.¹³

¹³ The other films from the forties in the top ten were *Brief Encounter* (1945), *Great Expectations* (1946), *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). The full list is available at the British Film Institute's website at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/bfi100/index.html> (4 May 2001).

Freeman (1997), like Murphy, also privileges the gangster film as a defining crime genre of realism, so that his examples are tied to notions of art imitating life and vice versa, and once again stressing a British genre's affinity with the presentation of national identity. He observes that George Orwell's anxiety about the erosion of English culture by American influence is 'part of a wider English fear that organised crime is in some way a corrupting influence not only on English society, but also, and more seriously, on the national character itself' (Part 1, p.1) and that the English have invariably preferred to 'think of organised crime as an unwelcome foreign import' (Part 1, p.2). As part of the cultural differences between the gangster films of Britain and America, he suggests that whereas American gangsters are presented in a 'dangerously beguiling way',

English films have instead concentrated upon examining the image and consideration of itself, a process which has considerable implications for English national identity, especially in resisting the powerful influence of the United States. (Part 1, p.3).

Thus, he places the study of the British gangster film firmly in the mainstream of British national cinema studies linked to questions of national identity, without recourse to Richards' alternative conception of national image, and in the context of the process of the negotiation that indigenous genres make with transnational forms (Hutchings, 1993).

Freeman, then, identifies a key tension between American and British film cultures and the representation of professional crime which is manifested, for instance, in the extent to which film-makers imitate or ignore American forms, the way that critical commentary applauds or denounces foreign influence or in the way that certain films become celebrated or rejected by specific audiences.

Freeman's study is also typical of the way that interest has been limited to films about professional crime in the context of the underworld or gangster film as part of the recovery of popular genres previously overlooked in the realist canon. However, little attention, for instance, has been given to low-budget second features where crime films were a niche market, apart from McFarlane (1994; 1996). His earlier study of British 'programmers' focuses on auteurs, whilst the later one considers the quality and quantity of the British second feature consisting of nearly 900 films between 1946-1963, a substantial body of British films that await detailed scrutiny. He establishes, for instance, how B films answered an industrial need in the exhibition pattern of double features, the extent of independent company production, and schematises the career trajectories of the directors involved. He also suggests that the most sustained debate on these films has taken place on the pages of *Picturegoer*, showing that filmgoers have noticed these films more than critics (p.60).

In particular he addresses the B 'crime thriller genre', but his discussion of genre is limited to six structural characteristics (pp.62-65).¹⁴ He does not consider the breakdown of the crime film, for instance, to be as complicated as the other major category of B film, the comedy which he suggests can be divided into sub-genres such as farce, romantic, domestic and personality comedy and burlesque. Of particular interest, however, is the way that he attempts to relate these films to the social. He argues that one of the grounds for their consideration is their 'stripped-down reflection' of reality:

¹⁴ The characteristics were; that the crime takes place before or shortly after the film starts; other crimes follow from "personal" motivations such as greed or ambition; criminal individuals are thinly sketched and favoured over gangs, and middle-class protagonists predominate; investigators come to the aid of the hero; the crime is solved by action, not by sleuthing; and romantic action is attached to the world of the hero (McFarlane, 1996, pp.62-65).

Unmediated by either idiosyncratic directing or writing talents, and not often imbued with the individuating mimetic detail of the A films of the period, they can, in some ways, be seen as a starker, more reliable barometer of what was *commonly* thought and felt at the time. Indeed, they often stand in an instructive relation to the A films: whereas the latter may give us a more fully developed sense of character and situation, in the B film the sheer functionality of these lays essentials bare. (p.52).

This is a highly debatable assertion. Is it not also reasonable, for example, to argue the opposite, that the B film is a stark, but incomplete 'document of the times' and therefore 'speaks' less about its social context? Furthermore, he adds that a defining characteristic of the second feature crime film is that the depicted crimes 'are essentially "personal", growing out of individual greed or ambition, rarely reflecting in any direct way the contemporary political or social scene' (p.62). In other words, B crime films are contradictorily both transparently revealing of their times and not socially relevant.

The major contribution to the study of British crime cinema is Chibnall and Murphy (1999). The editors suggest that the British 'underworld film', a sub-genre of the crime film consisting of 'films in which the activities of professional criminals feature significantly or which are set in an underworld milieu' constitutes a significant and socially relevant category (1999, p.3). However, because the crime genre has featured only marginally in critics' discussions of British cinema, it has been difficult to summarize its historic characteristics as an indigenous tradition without reference to other cinemas. Chibnall and Murphy, for instance, conclude that the underworld sub-genre lacks the coherence of the Hollywood gangster film, but that it has 'distinctive patterns and common characteristics' (p3). Their main points of reference for their overview of its history are American genres such as the gangster film and *noir*, and how

the films drew upon different iconographies and methods of professional crime in the two countries.

These comparisons are conventionally limited to a conception of the American gangster genre based in realism and a general concern primarily for the authenticity of underworld representations, within the traditional pragmatic approach to the representational aspects of British genres, particularly class and gender (Clay, 1999; Chadder, 1999; Spicer, 1999; Monk, 1999). For example, Chibnall and Murphy call for academic critics

to explore the tensions it [the British crime film] exhibits between realism and melodrama and see to what extent it is an important genre for investigating issues of class and gender. In exposing the flip side of working-class respectability and male gentility, it may provide crucial insights into shifting social conditions and changing masculinities since the Second World War. (p.2)

They raise the main elements that they believe are required to assess the contribution of the crime genre and the representation of professional crime to British cinema: how the 'underworld' is presented in British films, what kind of identities are put forward, and how it contributes to national cinema.

The re-evaluation of British genres, then, has begun so that the idea that genres are only of value for their social realism is changing, but it is a persistent idea. The crime film has been put forward as an important national genre in a way that has challenged its 'unBritish' status as a morbid fantasy of inauthentic working class culture implicated in the anti-social breakdown of postwar consensus. The relationship between social change and the crime film is examined in detail in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. This present chapter concludes with a summary of the literature of the subject field highlighting the work that remains to be done, the problems raised in the subject area, the limitations of the

current understanding of the British crime film and therefore the problem that will be addressed.

2.4 Summary

There are two key challenges that have to be addressed in relation to the study of the British crime film. The first is that attention has been limited to a small number of A films, major studios and auteurs, which leaves a huge field of study still to be examined. For instance, McFarlane (1996) has only begun to raise questions about the social significance and generic characteristics of the 'B crime thriller'. Secondly, British cinema studies has for a long time been preoccupied with both the realist core identity of national cinema and with questions of national identity and this has restricted discussion of British genre films. The work of Cook (1996) suggests that the test is to reconfigure British cinema as a more complex mainstream of hybrid generic film production.

Genre theory developed primarily in relation to Hollywood cinema and has played only a minor part in British cinema studies which is a key omission, since genre has been acknowledged as an important structuring mechanism of mainstream cinema (Burton and Petley, 1998). Genre criticism in British cinema has concentrated on studio based genres, has used pragmatic approaches to representation of class and gender as part of 'historical cultural studies' (Higson, 2000), and has particularly considered questions of transnationality of cultural production and the issue of indigenous genres. The linking of national cinema and national identity has been too persistent and overstates the cinema as a crucial instrument in the construction of national identity (Lovell, 1997).

The preoccupation with images of national identity and national cinema has also limited the debate to straightforward conceptions of British cinema in terms of, for instance, a central core of realism (Higson, 1996a) or dichotomies of realism and fantasy (Petley, 1986). The hunt for the 'true' identity of British cinema is as elusive as any attempt to *fix* identity since, like all meaning production, it is constantly in the process of being made, a procedure that is considered in some depth in Chapters 3 and 4. Films participate in the construction of national identity through direct address to conceptions of nationhood and more indirectly by representational discourses, for example, about class and gender, but the question of national identity is only one aspect of the social significance of (crime) films.

Chibnall and Murphy (1999) establish that the British crime film is a neglected popular genre in British cinema history. As an indigenous tradition, the genre lacks identity and critical discussion. The reliance on generic categories originating in American cinema has limited the context for thinking about the British crime film – is it like American cinema, or is it not, and does this make it indigenous? This is not an unproblematic methodology. For example, the American gangster genre, as examined in Chapter 4, is conceptualized in terms of realism, the traditional mode that informs the concern for authenticity in the pragmatic approach to the representational significance of crime films. Chibnall and Murphy recognise that the investigation of the significance of the crime film as a notable genre of social representation depends on a consideration of the 'tensions' between melodrama and realism. The melodramatic strand of British cinema has been conceded, but there has not been a sustained debate about the melodramatic qualities of British films in the context of genre theory and realist discourses have been central to the taste culture of the crime genre.

The problem to address, therefore, is the lack of knowledge about the generic characteristics of the British crime film and its claim to be a genre of social significance. The realist aesthetic has dominated discussion of the crime genre and yet there is an absence of dialogue about genre theory and criticism in relation to British cinema. There is, therefore, a demonstrable 'need' to subject the British crime film to closer scrutiny and as a case study of British cinema and genre theory. The aim of such a study involves the application of genre criticism to the relationship between texts (crime films) and the contexts of production and socio-historical significance. The objective of the research is primarily to respond to Chibnall and Murphy's call to examine how the British crime film is revelatory about social attitudes, such as towards class and gender, but also to consider the efficacy of a less pragmatic approach to genre in the British context. How, for instance, would a more theoretical approach to British genres, of the kind that have been applied to the American cinema, be of assistance in understanding the nature of the British crime film in terms of its aesthetic and representational characteristics? In order to identify and critically appraise the theoretical underpinnings and methodology of this research topic, a specific discussion of genre theory and criticism in Chapter 4 is preceded by a more general analysis of the text and context issues relating to the study of crime films in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

TEXT AND CONTEXT: 'MAKING SENSE OF' CRIME FILMS

It has been established that the crime film is generally absent in the history of British cinema. Another popular genre, then, is overdue its recovery from critical neglect (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999). It has been demonstrated that in 'British cinema studies', the study of genres has been dominated by concerns for the representation of class and gender, as part of a wider form of historical cultural studies in which films have been placed in specific socio-historical contexts. For example, British film texts have been defined both in relation to economic and institutional factors, as films 'made in Britain', and culturally as 'British films'. Thus, a preoccupation with signification, the uncovering of meaning, has taken place through the influence of cultural studies across the social sciences in which an interest in the politics of representation has led to the placing of films as cultural texts in the social context of their production.

The aim of this chapter is to begin to discuss in some detail the theoretical foundation of the research in support of the rationale within which the research is pursued. The objective is to describe and critically appraise the methods and ideas that have contributed to the research outside of the discipline of film studies. Firstly, the general problem of signification will be addressed through a consideration of the text-context relationship involved in the study of film and an introduction to the issue of the 'theory of representation'. This is followed by an outline of criminological perspectives in order to demonstrate that crime is a contentious category and to review the overlapping interest in crime and its representation in the media. Finally, the theoretical issues of

‘making sense of’ crime films are examined and the focus of the research’s politics of representation established.

3.1 Cinematic texts and contexts

In his review of the current state of film theory, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (2000) suggests that ‘theory has come first and foremost to concern itself with meaning, often with the aim of bringing to the surface those aspects of meaning which can be characterised as ideological’ (p.13). He argues that although the methodologies have waned (historical materialism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and so on), the problem of representation has remained central, so much so that ‘without a theory of representation there can hardly be said to be a theory of film at all’ (p.9). British cinema, however, was never a central case study for the structuralist project to discover ‘how films mean’. Instead, a more pragmatic approach to the representational aspects of British cinema has been at the forefront of most studies (Higson and Ashby, 2000, p.13), but with a theoretical conviction nevertheless: films represent their epochs.

At the centre of the concept of representation is the relationship between reality and its referent. Film is an audio-visual medium that creates an illusion of reality. It invites us to consider how the image and its referent can be related. Usually, this takes the form of situating the film text in its social and historical context by reference to the specific conditions at the time of the film’s production or circulation. As representation, however, a film is the product of quite complex contexts that discourage critics from simple reflection models to more complex notions of refraction. In its commercial mainstream form, film is essentially a commodified story, a product that circulates in an entertainment economy. But this is only part of a film’s wider social context. The

problem is that whereas the film text is a tangible object of study, the film context is not a fixed entity, but a product of the concerns of those who wish to demonstrate the significance of the text from their own particular perspectives. This raises theoretical and methodological issues that need to be discussed arising from the belief that it is possible to interpret '*what* films mean' in relation to, for example, their socio-historical context or ideological effects, an underlying hypothesis of the theory of representation.

Annette Kuhn has suggested that 'dominant cinema' acquires its specific characteristics from the interaction between economic and ideological factors, between the ways that films are produced, distributed and exhibited (1982, p.21). In the economic context she includes the institutions of finance, organization and administration, and regulation. The film text is primarily seen as being ideological because cinema adopts formal strategies in order to 'speak' to audiences and allow readings to be constructed. Conceptually, then, crime films result from a series of commercial exchanges in an institutional context, a property that is examined in Chapter 5. They also have ideological significance due to their distinctive textual properties as the result of formal strategies, but firstly they are commodities.

Thus, one way of understanding British crime cinema would be to look at the intersection between the economic-institutional context and the ideological conditions resulting from aesthetic strategies. However, this is a major project, for whilst the economic context of the British film industry, with its mixture of private enterprise and state intervention is well documented, for instance by Dickinson and Street (1985), there are not many studies of British studios, production and distribution companies and exhibition contexts. Very little attention, for example, has been given to the minor

studios and B film specialists such as Butcher's, Danzigers, Merton Park, or Tempean. Furthermore, the aesthetic dimension of British cinema has not been thoroughly exposed to genre theory and criticism or analysis of narrative codes and conventions to the extent of that afforded to the classical Hollywood cinema. Therefore, institutionally and aesthetically-ideologically, the British cinema is still relatively an 'unknown' one.

This has not, however, inhibited attempts to uncover the ideological significance of British cinema, nor the politics of representation project more generally. Sufficient contextual and textual evidence can usually be found to support conclusions, but where should the balance lie between text and context? Hill (1999b), for instance, describes his study of British cinema in the 1980s as a 'species of contextual history' (p.xi). He proposes that the distinctive economic and aesthetic context in this period is the creation of a British 'art cinema' through the combination of a 'national cinema' with public service television (p.xii). What concerns him above all, though, are the issues raised by the texts rather than the texts themselves, their discourses of national identity in terms of gender, class and race, 'how texts are activated in relation to specific socio-historical contexts' (p.xi).¹

The problem with this contextual approach is that it produces quite a narrow interpretation of texts in the service of the cultural politics of identity. It marginalizes other aesthetic dimensions of texts, and their relationship with audiences particularly through genre. In contrast to Hill, Nowell-Smith, although not addressed specifically to British cinema, concludes his review of post-theoretical film studies by calling for a 'return to theories of the aesthetic' (2000, p.16). He argues that the concern for *how*

¹ He concluded that British cinema in the eighties provided a more plural and hybrid representation of 'national' life than ever seen before (Hill, 1999b, pp.241-243).

films mean is now less important than *what* films mean. A particular concern is the way that films, like other art forms, evade attempts to treat them linguistically.² In terms of 'theories of the aesthetic', Nowell-Smith has in mind the concern for the problem of representation in terms of the idea created, its referent and how representation is produced within the work of art itself. In other words, problems of aesthetics, 'of artistic expressivity and the spectator's emotional response' (p.8). In British cinema studies, theories of meaning were not used widely to support the politics of representation. The aesthetic qualities of British films, such as genre, have been less considered than their representational politics. This is why the hypothesis has been proposed that genre can be used to consider the relationship between films and their social context less pragmatically than heretofore, to assess 'how representation is produced within the work of art itself', and to raise the question of aesthetics.

3.2 The significance of crime

Crucially, in reference to the politics of representation, crime films have real-life referents in that they contain acts deemed criminal by society. This section looks at the significance of crime, of 'making sense of' crime and, in particular, why this might be an important context for thinking about the representation of law and order.

Crime has its own academic disciplines, such as criminology and the sociology of deviance. It is a contested category with competing theoretical perspectives and this is why the significance of the word needs explication. It is not intended to approach the study of crime films primarily from these viewpoints, but to draw upon some of the concepts, methodologies and research in areas where there are overlapping concerns

² So much of what films do, like paintings and music, is beyond linguistic explanation, but language is all we have, unless for instance, we respond by making art about art.

about the representation of crime. Shared interests, for instance, have linked film studies and criminology, with works on film by criminologists (Nellis, 1987; 1988, Sparks, 1996), or by film historians about real-life crime (Murphy, 1993).

There are many criminological perspectives that have tried to understand crime, such as classicism, positivism, Marxism, interactionism, and feminism. Classicism, for instance, emerged prior to the nineteenth century, but it has been a persistent conception. It proposes that people choose to commit crime of their own rational free will and can be controlled through punishment (Muncie et al., 1996, p.xvii; Garland, 1997, p.23). In the 1970s, for example, neo-classical attitudes to criminality emerged to claim that ‘crime emanates from wicked people who are insufficiently deterred’ (Muncie et al., 1996, p.xx). In the nineteenth century, a positivist science of criminology emerged that suggested that crime is a non-rational and determinate product of biology or under-socialisation. Thus, it became possible to isolate and study the specific causes of crime, whether biological, psychological or social, and treat them (pp.viii-xiii).

These two perspectives were influential in the period under investigation. It was a time in which there was a consensus of opinion informed by the combination of social positivism, that the major causes of crime were impoverished social conditions, and neo-classicism, that crime could be contained by the criminal justice system (Young, 1997, p.481). Experience, however, was to prove that neither affluence nor the rule of law was able to reduce the crime rate.³ In the political context, for example, contested party politics over the issue of law and order were exacerbated in the early sixties following substantial publicity about youth culture and organized crime (Downes and

³ ‘In Britain, for example, between 1951 and 1971 the real disposable income per person increased by 64 per cent, whilst the crime rate more than doubled, with a rise of 172 per cent’ (Young, 1997, p.481)

Morgan, 1997, p.97).⁴ There was, then, a crisis of ‘aetiology and of penalty’ (Young, 1997, p.482).

During the late sixties, critical criminologists began to deconstruct the pragmatism of positivism (Garland, 1997, p.49). The challenge of interactionism, for example, marked a break away from causes to social control and the idea that there is no crime without law, and that social control leads to widespread deviance (Muncie et al., 1996, p.xix). By the late sixties, a number of developments in this area had coalesced around the ‘New Criminology’ (Taylor et al., 1973a; 1973b), which was concerned with a radical understanding of the social order and the power to criminalize and control through the labelling of deviancy, and which could only be remedied in social justice.

It is possible to synthesize these developments as an important social context for the study of crime films in the period 1946 to 1965. During this time, a politico-criminological consensus was challenged by the unexpected outcomes of the reform and modernization of Britain. The application of scientific knowledge to social and personal problems, the improvement to social conditions during a period of economic recovery, and the pursuit of a correctional penal-welfare policy, supported by a belief in the causes and punishment of crime, did not prevent the rise in recorded crime, and the law and order terrain started to become a contentious political arena.

Other perspectives draw attention to the contentious nature of crime as a category. Sociological criminology, for instance, situates crime mainly in a ‘conception of rule-breaking and control’ (Rock, 1997, p.261). From this standpoint emerged the idea of signification, ‘the interpretative practices that order social life’ (p.255), which, as

⁴ The end of the bipartisan approach, however, was 1970, when the Tories blamed the Labour government for the rise in crime and violence and began to link crime with political protest and industrial unrest.

labelling theory, was influential to New Criminology. Radical criminologists generally have been concerned with inequalities of power rather than causation, and with holistic explanations such as criminogenic capitalism, the suggestion that crime is a widespread defining characteristic of an inequitable system, as discussed in Marxism since the nineteenth century (Muncie et al., 1996, p.xviii).

Functionalist criminology has also put forward a similar interpretation of crime as a whole system, rather than empirical fragments. Functionalism sees crime not as a source of disorder that undermines society, but as an activity that contributes to social cohesion through the identification of deviance (Rock, 1997, pp.253-255). This suggests that crime films might be implicated in the reproduction of social order. New theoretical frameworks since the sixties have continued to question criminology's assumptions, so that the definition and explanation of crime has become a very competitive area.

Feminist critiques, for instance, have drawn attention to how criminology has been driven by male assumptions and interests, advocating that 'gender is the single most important variable in criminality' (Heidensohn, 1989, p.91). Traditional criminology, in which women are ignored, marginalized or misrepresented, does not consider the importance of the fact that crime is predominantly menswork. Crime films, too, are about menswork and so the representation of masculinity is an essential consideration.

A study of crime, then, is based on a number of assumptions that need to be foregrounded because of the political implications of such an enquiry:

...understanding the 'problem of crime' does not simply involve trying to account for why certain individuals transgress moral and legal codes whilst others do not, but also necessitates interrogation of how and why it is that only certain behaviours seem to be subjected to criminal sanction whilst other harmful acts may go unnoticed, unpunished or are even socially approved. (Muncie et al, 1996, p.xiv).

Crime is committed in all sections of society, but the 'crime problem' is ideologically restricted to those 'serious crimes' such as murder, rape, assault, robbery and theft which in criminal law are 'so constructed as to exclude many similar, and in important respects, identical acts, and these are acts likely to be committed more frequently by powerful individuals' (Box, 1996, p.251). In the case of murder, for example, Box draws attention to how the criminal law excludes some types of 'avoidable killings' such as deaths resulting from acts of employers' negligence or from failures in state regulation. For property crimes such as robbery and theft, exclusions would include tax evasions by wealthy individuals or corporations and labour market operations such as redundancies or wage reductions.⁵ The significance of this, of course, is that the presence or absence of certain types of 'crime' in filmic representation is likewise potentially ideological. In other words, is the *representation* of the 'crime problem' in British crime film similarly as ideologically restricted as in criminal law?

The politics of the presentation of certain crimes at the expense of others in the media has entered the mainstream in the current period of postmodernity. In a recent crime novel, for example, set in the London of 'Jack the Ripper', Peter Ackroyd constructs an encounter between his serial killer narrator and another London resident at that time, Karl Marx. In the book they share a cab ride in the fog of London and their conversation foregrounds the ideological work behind the over-representation of murder in society:

'A fine night for a murder,' I said.

'If I may say so sir, murder is a bourgeois preoccupation.'

⁵ Occasionally, criminals themselves are able to recognise the inequalities of treatment under the law: 'Walk out of Marks and Spencer with a jumper that you haven't paid for and you might spend three months inside; steal millions of pounds from the inland revenue and bask in both the sun and respectability of an island fringed with palm trees' (Richardson, 1992, p.20-21).

‘Oh? Is it so?’

‘We dwell on the suffering of one, and forget about the sufferings of many. When we ascribe guilt to one single agent, then we can deny the responsibility of it all.’

‘I cannot follow you there.’

‘What is one murder here or there compared with the historical process? And yet, when we pick up a newspaper, what do we find but murder alone?’. (Ackroyd, 1995, p.59-60).

It is interesting, also, that in crime fiction, non-normative conceptions of avoidable killing are often associated with the deviancy of anti-social, heinous villains, as in this exchange between James Bond and Goldfinger over the latter’s plan to use chemical weapons:

“You’re mad! You don’t really mean you’re going to kill sixty thousand people!”

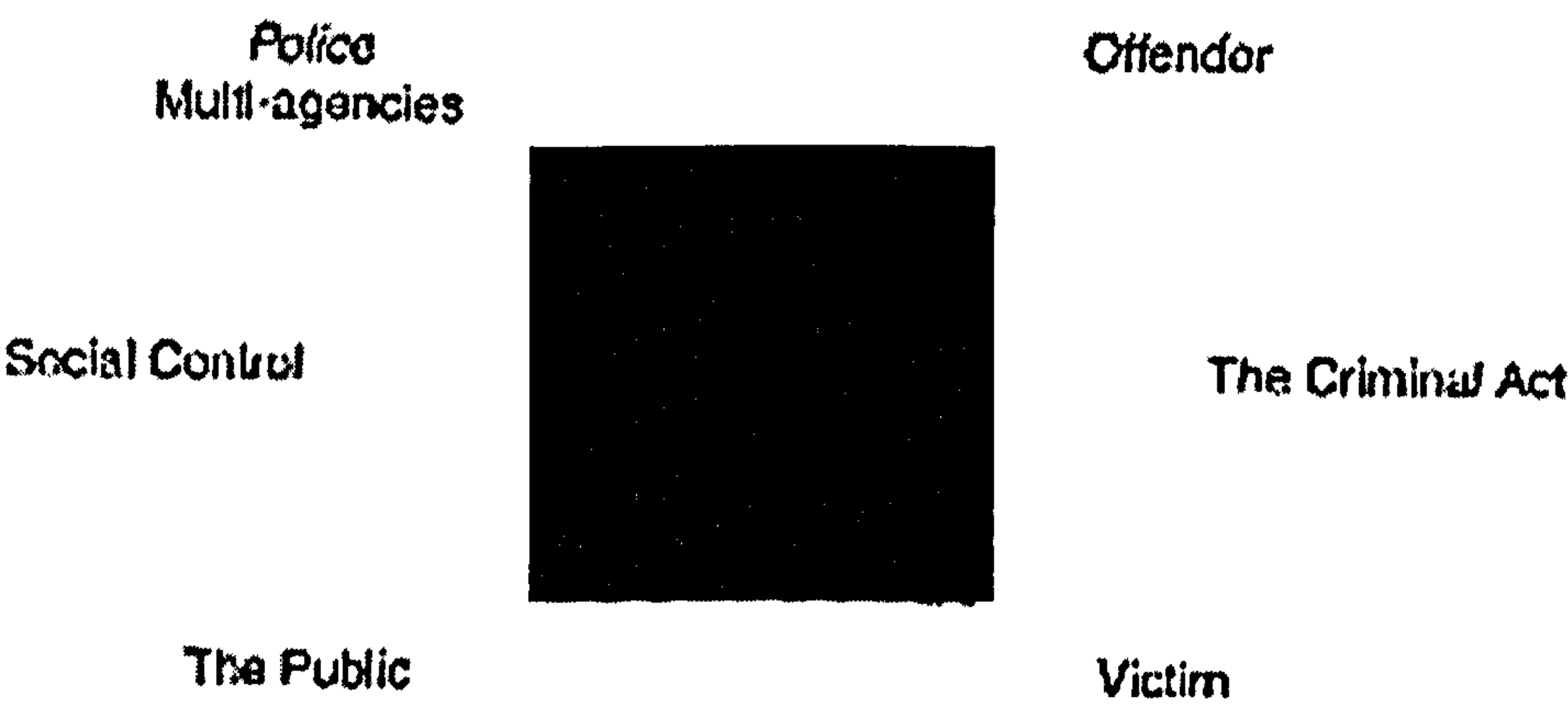
“Why not? American motorists do it every two years”. (Fleming, 1961, p.186).

The ‘problem’ about crime, then, is that it is an ‘interdisciplinary site of intense academic contest’ (Young, 1997, p.482). Criminological perspectives are useful because they provide insight into the social context of crime as media representation. A convenient model for this purpose is Jock Young’s ‘The Square of Crime’ (Figure 1). Young suggests that the social context of crime consists of the immediate social interaction of four elements diagrammatically represented at the corners of a square: agencies of the state; the public (the informal system of social control); offenders; and victims (1997, p.486). This offers a summary of crime as both a ‘real’ activity that arises out of social relations and society’s central values, which can be represented in film, and as an activity that is labelled by society, in a process in which film can participate.⁶

⁶ In the mid-1980s, Young disassociated himself from ‘New Criminology’ by suggesting that the causes of crime do need to be established and theorised as part of a counter attack to the more reactionary

FIGURE 1

THE SQUARE OF CRIME



Source: Young (1997, p.486).

3.3 The media representation of crime

Criminology focuses on the causes and alleviation of crime, and so the mass media has been examined as a causal link. Similarly, in media studies, in relation to crime, effects debates have predominated, and the causes of violence or the production of fear through the over-representation of violent crime (Schlesinger, Dobash and Weaver, 1992) have been primary concerns. It was the influence of radical criminology, however, that led to a sustained questioning of images of crime, especially in factual reporting, from sociological perspectives. In this area, there were five pivotal studies (Kidd-Hewitt, 1995, p.11); Young (1971); Cohen (1972); Cohen and Young (1973); Chibnall (1977); and Hall et al. (1978). In different ways, these texts are about the way that news is

policies of the 'New Right'. This position became known as 'Left realism'. It kept the analysis of radical criminology, but conceded that crime had real causes that needed to be addressed (Young, 1997).

constructed, 'manufactured' in ideological and political frameworks. Chibnall's study of crime journalism in the postwar period, for example, accounts for the ideological effect of the struggle for dominance through the labelling of deviants such as youths, terrorists and trade unionists, in the professional practices, and in particular, the source relationships of journalists. It offers a functionalist perspective on the rise of the 'law-and-order crisis', in which the State is seen to be held together by the very elements that the media informs us are pulling it apart.⁷

The sociological tradition, then, has been influential in conceptualizing the relationship between crime and the media, and in terms of the 'square of crime', the emphasis has been on the media as part of the culture of social control, constructing images of the police, offenders and victims. Research in this area contributes to closing the gap in knowledge in films studies about the British crime film. For example, Nellis (1987; 1988) provides a functionalist interpretation of the 'prison movie', 'a feature film...set wholly or mainly in a penal institution...or – more loosely – which takes imprisonment *and its consequences* as a primary theme' (1987, p.2). He takes a cross-generic approach to his field of study by including comedies such as *Two Way Stretch* (1960), Borstal institution films such as *Boys in Brown* (1949), and prison dramas such as *The Quare Fellow* (1962). He wants to show how 'prison films' 'have an intimate and penalogically interesting relationship to the realities they purport to reflect' (p.25). Firstly, in terms of the socio-historical context, he finds that prison films in the immediate postwar period of reconstruction are characterised by a cautious optimism about reform and rehabilitation, but that by the early sixties this optimism had become

⁷ A later study, Schlesinger and Tumber (1994) refined the analysis of source-media relations in the contemporary context by showing how institutions attempt to intervene in the production of news, but only by a continuous struggle over its management, rather than by a comfortable, straightforward maintenance of hegemony.

the target for scorn, satire and scepticism, and by the late seventies, that prison films show a crisis in the penal system through the dominating presence of violence (pp.15-16). The socio-historical pattern he discovers, therefore, dovetails broadly with both the crises of penality (Young 1997) and of law-and-order (Chibnall, 1977). Secondly, his view on representations of imprisonment is that they have operated as images of punishment, as penal publicity. Prison films, he argues, were integral elements of penal discourses, 'part of the institution of punishment itself' (p.34). They might have been made to protest about punishment or specific penal practices, but he suggests that they end up adding to the state's images of intimidation, by circulating fearful imagery in an entertaining way (1988, p.3).⁸ Cinemas become, in effect, temporary 'theatres of punishment', in a literal adaptation of Foucault's terminology about the censures of everyday life (1987, p.34).

Robert Reiner looks at crime in the media by combining the quantitative methods of content analysis with more textual concerns for the analysis of content. He was involved in the study of film as a member of an ESRC supported project looking more generally at the postwar media presentation of crime between 1945 and 1991.⁹ The project involved a cross-generic content analysis of 'crime in film' and addressed the effects debate by focusing on the popularly held perception that increases in media depictions of criminal violence have led to a rise in crime, violence and a disrespectful society.¹⁰ In terms of cinema, they looked at whether the generic content of feature films had

⁸ As evidence, Nellis made three general observations about British and American prison films; the attention paid to the journey to prison and reception procedures, that invite empathetic identification; shots of gates and walls that emphasise what the institution is about; and a general mood of fear and pessimism.

⁹ The project is entitled *Discipline or Desubordination?: Changing Media Representations of Crime Since the Second World War*, and his co-members are Jessica Allen and Sonia Livingstone. Details about the project can be found in Reiner (1996).

¹⁰ Previous content analyses of television and the press had revealed that there were no straightforward increases in crime representations over time (Allen, Livingstone and Reiner, 1997, p.90).

changed since 1945 and, if so, how these shifts affected the context for crime representations. They counted films in which crime played a 'central role in the narrative', with a focus on the crime film in relation to other genres and the presence of crime in other genres. Thus, they did not merely quantify incidences of crime, but aimed to provide a basis for the textual analysis of films by establishing a wider context of trends beyond a few chosen films or a particular genre. These trends, they assert, are important because they offer a link with audience reception, expectation, interpretation and effects. In this particular enquiry, they suggest that there are two kinds of appeal offered by crime to audiences, depictions of crime, action, violence and fear, and opportunities for moral affirmation or questioning (Allen, Livingstone and Reiner, p.90).

Their method was to take a sample of film synopses of all films released in Britain, rather than 'British films' or 'films made in Britain'.¹¹ They examined 1,440 synopses, which is about ten percent of the film population between 1945 and 1991. Films were coded in terms of crime content, whether they had a 'mention of crime, criminal, or the criminal justice system' and by ten generic categories (p.92).¹²

They find that, as in other media, there was no increase in depictions of crime, but that in the postwar period, the representation of crime is a perennial, constant preoccupation (p.97). The incidence of crime content as a proportion of all films remained steady throughout the period at an average of forty-four percent, dispersed across a wide range of genres. The proportion of crime films, with fluctuations, also

¹¹ F. Maurice Speed's *Annual Film Review* was used as the source of synopses. The films in the sample were mainly American and British, but also included films from other countries released in Britain.

¹² Ten generic categories are used, taken from types of films commonly referred to in a number of reference books. The genres are western, crime, war, romance, fantasy, sex, farce, adventure, drama and 'other'.

remained relatively constant, averaging seventeen percent of total films released. A summary of their findings in relation to the most relevant genres of crime and drama and in the reported period that coincides most closely with the present study (1945-1967) is presented in Figure 2. This shows that during the immediate years of the postwar 'crime wave', the crime genre was proportionately at its highest at twenty-five percent of all films between 1945 and 1949, although overall crime content was not significantly higher, and the proportion of crime content in the period 1945-1967 remained relatively constant. However, the national origin of films released in Britain changed quite significantly. The percentage of American films fell from eighty-four percent in 1945-1949, to forty-three percent in 1963-1967 and in the crime genre from eighty-eight percent to forty-five percent. This was a period, therefore, when either 'films made in Britain' or other non-American films, overtook the number of American films released in Britain, although they were being underpinned by American finance.¹³

Overall, however, it was found in terms of textual properties that the pattern of crime content in film resembled that of other media; murder and other violent crimes were far more common than official statistics; murder was the primary crime in most films; property offences were in a significant minority of films up to the late 1960s, though seldom thereafter; up to the mid-1960s, crime was represented usually as an abnormal, one-off intrusion into a stable order, and thereafter images of an all-pervasive, routinized threat of crime became more common; the graphic representation of violence in this period increased; crime fiction under-represented property crime generally and over-represented serious property offences, frequently involving violence; offenders and victims were presented in the image of those who made them, white, higher-status,

¹³ American finance for British film production peaked in the late 1960s. American companies were responsible for the production of over 100 films in Britain between 1950 and 1957 (Street, 1997, p.20).

middle-aged males; clear-up rates were exaggerated considerably; by the early 1970s an increasing number of films showed offenders escaping justice; and brutal and corrupt police officers became more common from the mid-1960s (Reiner, 1997, pp.205-210).

FIGURE 2

TRENDS IN THE CRIME AND DRAMA GENRES BY YEAR AND PRODUCTION SOURCE 1945-1967

Date ¹⁴	Crime			Drama			All genres		
	%	%US	%CC	%	%US	%CC	%US	%CC	<i>N</i>
1945-49	25	88	100	17	79	24	84	43	231
1951-55	15	67	100	17	55	34	70	40	223
1957-61	14	41	100	17	42	29	51	40	204
1963-67	17	31	100	16	41	33	43	50	169

Notes.
 % is the percentage of films in the genre. %US is the percentage of films that are American. %CC is the percentage of films that contain crime content. *N* is the number of films coded.

Source: Allen et al. (1997, pp.95-96).

What this proves, therefore, is that crime is represented, as Box maintains about real-life crime, in an ideologically restricted manner. They find that crime is now represented with ‘increased anomie and social disintegration’, instead of ‘within narratives of progress or human or social fallibility’ (Allen et al., p.96).¹⁵ This implies

¹⁴ The data was presented in groups of years in order to display trends clearly.
¹⁵ The decline of the western, for instance, is highlighted for the loss of its ‘highly moral context’ for crime.

how crime films at the beginning of the postwar period traditionally reproduced social order, whereas later, under the influence of law and order crises in the sixties and seventies, the representation of order was no longer a satisfactory image of the reality of crime for film-makers and audiences.

The authors recognise that the significance of these findings relies upon further empirical investigation. Their approach shows a concern for the analysis of content, but it is a content analysis of film synopses, of secondary texts rather than a study of film texts focusing on more qualitative properties of, for instance, the function of crime content within different generic categories. Nevertheless, it establishes the constancy of crime representation in British film releases and the changing nature of its ideological significance in the postwar period that can form the basis for thinking about both the quantification of British crime film production (Chapter 5) and the more qualitative textual properties of crime films in their socio-historical context (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

3.4 The dramatization of crime

Criminological perspectives, then, have addressed the textual and contextual significance of crime films, but in the very specific context of the political consequences of law and order history and issues. In this respect, Richard Sparks focuses on the dramatization of crime (1992; 1993; 1995; 1996) and his research acknowledges that the significance of the crime drama is that it can be ostensibly concerned with crime, but ‘about’ other things within the same dramatic structures. He suggests that media imagery is an important object domain of criminology because of the extent to which it informs and drives public perceptions of crime, defining ‘the position which “law and order” occupies as a term of public debate’ (1995, p.60). He analyses crime drama’s

‘repertoire of imagery’ about the threat to social order and its restoration and repair, and concludes, in relation to television ‘cop shows’, that there is a tension between ‘anxiety and reassurance’ at the basis of its appeal, ‘which in turn may be either manifestly or obscurely related to crime and law enforcement’ (pp.60-62).¹⁶ In other words, crime drama might be ‘about’ law and order, policing and crime, but it might also involve pleasures and ‘troubles’ that have their basis elsewhere:

The police story is no longer one thing, if it ever was. It has become in multiform and various ways a screen on which the point of contact between our personal and social anxieties is enacted. (p.64).

Sparks considers the significance of the way that the complexity of contemporary crime problems are subsumed within a fabular moral structure (Eco, 1979)¹⁷ that divides the world of crime and law enforcement, for instance, into simple categories of heroism and retribution, and speculates that they might keep alive a preoccupation with punishment (1992, pp.161-162). The adoption of Eco’s approach to texts as part of a production process and as constructions aimed at presumed audiences is useful in explaining the ideological processes at work in crime fiction, but there is a danger of detaching this analysis from its historical context (Chapman, 1999, pp.32-34) and the limited suggestion that television crime fiction makes us fond of punishment through the agency of heroic force reflects his particular address to the criminological interest in the question of the media’s contribution to behavioural and attitudinal modification.

¹⁶ Sparks’ study of television crime series and serials (1992) examined about 100 episodes of mainly British and American programmes broadcast in Britain in a four month period during 1985. Thus, once again a field of texts in circulation rather than British programmes.

¹⁷ Sparks follows Eco’s argument that ‘the most fruitful way of examining any popular cultural “text” is *both* as the outcome of a specific process of production *and* as therefore necessarily involving a particular construction of its presumed or hypothetical audience’ (Sparks, 1992, p.117).

A subsequent study, however, opens out his concerns to previous acknowledged omissions, particularly in relation to the significance of crime as menswork (1996). This work looks at the connections between masculinity and heroic agency in recent Hollywood action films, and reasons that crime films respond and react to current notions of gender identities, as well as being about crime. Thus, he recognises that

the hero is inherently an overcoded image: he bears meanings about justice, morality, and law, about being a man, in the same layered iconography. (p.354).

The significant shift that he makes, therefore, is to concede that criminological perspectives about popular crime narratives had tended to misread their ostensible subject matter as the 'real sources of their pleasure or appeal', when such 'political' readings are only one aspect of the drama of crime (p.354). Crime fiction is a place where men, who are mostly 'seduced into conformity rather than crime', can enter a realm of transcendence and enjoy the second hand pleasures of masculine heroism (and villainy) (p.358).¹⁸ This is a very important point and one that informs the rationale of the present study to extend the investigation of the politics of representation of the crime film by simultaneous reference to crime and law and order discourses and to masculinity with the suggestion that crime films can be about 'many things at once'.

¹⁸ From a feminist perspective, crime fiction is also concerned with 'how things could be', for instance, in taking the very masculinist detective novel and creating female subjectivity, as in the novels of Sara Paretsky, Patricia Cornwell and Helen Zahavi (Naffine, 1997, pp.120-138).

3.5 The 'ideological work' of crime fiction

The particular interest of academics concerned with crime fiction has been the 'ideological work' performed by the media. Some indicative studies will now be addressed to establish the basis of a critique outlined in the next section in which three particular issues are important: the postmodern critique of dominant ideology, the representation of masculinities, and the post-structural revision of meaning production, so that a clear approach to the theory of representation that underpins the investigation can be stated.

Palmer (1978) considers the sociology of the thriller as a popular literary genre that attempts to fictionally resolve the ideological contradiction between competitive individualism and sociality in industrial society. In this generic form the hero (such as the detective) is intrinsically competitive (individual) and he must overcome the source of evil, a criminal conspiracy that is inside the world, but not of it. The thriller's conspiracy is a disruption of the 'natural order', the normality of the world. The triumph of the hero is a victory for individualism, but on behalf of society, a fantasy of crime control seeking to deny the consequences of social organisation and to reassure the audience. The essence of the thriller's ideological work, then, is that it resolves a false dichotomy because individuality is itself a social construct.

Knight, following Palmer, agrees that popular (widely read, successful) crime fiction is determined by the way it attempts to resolve problems and contradictions in the dominant ideology:

major examples of crime fiction not only create an idea (or a hope, or a dream) about controlling crime, but both realise and validate a whole view of the world, one shared by the people who become the central audience to buy, read and find comfort in a particular variety of crime fiction. (1980, p.2).

Similarly, Buxton, argues that the form of television series can be related to the historical moment of their production because they are determined by an (unconscious) ideological project¹⁹ and a (conscious) commercial strategy (1990, p.14). His interpretative explanation of television texts relies on a reading of recurring themes attached to different narrative situations that are mythic in their attempts to resolve problems that are only partially capable of resolution and riddled with tensions and strains.

In relation to British television production, the police series *The Sweeney* has received particular attention from an ideological perspective.²⁰ Hurd (1985), for example, offers a straightforward dominant ideology approach in which the constructed image of policing involves 'ideological work' through a process of seeking consensus, maintaining myths and hiding power relations. He concludes that the pleasure of the series for audiences might lie in a shared ideal image of policing.

Alan Clarke (1992) takes a similar approach. In his consideration of the relation between society and the police series he suggests that the social is refracted through genre, particularly through shifts in the 'moral domain of the hero' (p.248). In his view, the style changes, but core values (the threat of crime/the family/rule breaking/individualism) remain as structuring ideological continuities. Individual police series, therefore, are only of interest to him in the way that they reorder these ideological elements in accordance with the consensus shaping function of dominant ideology.

¹⁹ Adopted from the work on literature by Pierre Macherey (1978).

²⁰ Influentially, an edition of *Screen Education* (Autumn 1976) was devoted to *The Sweeney* as a case study.

Charlotte Brunsdon (1998) continues the idea that television crime fiction fulfils an important ideological role. Her claim is that the police series 'has been a privileged site for staging the trauma of the breakup of the postwar settlement' (p.223). Her conclusion is that the genre's terrain is manifestly about law and order issues, about policing, the government of civil society, and the concerns of justice, truth, agency and accountability (p.224). These constant features, as in Clarke's structural elements, are seen to be subject to historical specificity and aesthetic diversity, but the genre is seen as having a binding discursive context that 'works-over and worries at the anxieties and exclusions of contemporary citizenship, of being British and living here, now' (p.225).²¹ Essentially, then, she uses an ideological framework in which the formation of national identity, as in British national cinema studies, is given particular emphasis and significance.

Brunsdon's approach to the ideological context of crime fiction, as in so many studies in this area, tries to impose too much of a totalising or 'grand narrative' explanation. Crime fiction, as John Clarke argues, like factual reportage, adds to the store of images about crime and the social order by both drawing upon and contributing to the social imagery of crime, but in quite diverse ways, by reinforcing, re-imagining, or challenging conventional assumptions about it (1996, p.96). Like Sparks, he argues that the significance of the dramatization of crime is not solely to be found in the politics of law and order. It is, after all, crime *fiction*. Clarke makes this point in relation to the detective novel from a criminological perspective. Detective fiction is often about

²¹ Brunsdon's case study was the police series of the 1980s, characterised as an age acutely anxious about the responsibility and accountability of policing, with three particular discursive contexts; an increasingly punitive law and order rhetoric; privatisation and private enterprise; and 'Equal Opportunities'.

murder, and murder is not very realistic in the sense that it is one of the rarest of crimes (1996, p.95).

3.6 The theory of representation

At the beginning of this chapter, it was suggested that the theory of representation applied pragmatically in British cinema studies is that films can be referred back to the 'moment' or epoch of their socio-historical context. This idea will now be scrutinized further in order to establish the focus of the research's approach to the politics of representation in films that dramatize professional crime. Representation is 'the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language' (Hall, 1997, p.17). It links concepts to language and enables us to refer both to the real world and imaginary worlds. Ultimately, any theory of representation involves a process of making meaning, and this in itself is subject to contested conceptualisation.

3.6.1 Ideology and representation

The concept of ideology can be used to place representation in a context in which it draws attention to the structures of power within society. However, as illustrated with reference to studies in crime fiction, it is a problematic theory since it tends to be applied as a totalising theory of media power, when in fact, popular culture, although organised by institutional frameworks and formal strategies, is fragmentary and competitive, open and polysemic:

The mass media are popular not because they impose a single dominant ideology or moral consensus, but because they leave space for different moral readings by diverse audiences. (Ericson, 1991, p.231).

Collins' postmodern perspective on popular films also suggests that they are fundamentally ideological, but not within the dominant paradigm. Films are ideological, he suggests, in a paradigm in which differentiation and competition are core features (1989, p.111). There is competition between different modes of representing experience to which audiences become drawn, and once audiences become familiar with textual conventions, they can take pleasure in their ability to 'produce a satisfying vision of the world as it is or as they would like it to be, at least on occasion' (p.89), or delight in their violation.

In terms of cultural production, Collins suggests that popular forms such as films are produced in an intertextual arena where individual discourses (or texts) attempt to define themselves against other texts, other genres, or within genres (p.43). Those who create popular cultural forms are attempting to mediate experience by 'clearing a space' as well as 'furlowing other texts', to try and establish their own fiction within the field of discourses surrounding it (p.49).²² The danger of adopting this postmodern critique of the dominant ideology thesis, in which film culture is a 'fundamentally conflicted terrain', is, as with structuralism, of detaching the analysis from its historical context. The validity of this theoretical tenet could be addressed empirically to ascertain the degree of conflicted terrain in popular film culture, but this would need very close textual analysis applied to many examples. This is not a research question that is included in the present study, but the concept is regarded as being useful in the sense that it draws attention to the *possibility* of diverse competing texts, but subject to the institutional and other historical forces

²² Collins gives the example of P. D. James' novel *The Skull Beneath the Skin* (1982) which he argued has three major intertextual components that combine to legitimate her discourse; classic detective fiction; contemporary detective novels; and Elizabethan revenge tragedy (1989, pp.46-48).

The concept of ideology, however, is a theoretical area with a problematic that is beyond the design of the research, but it is acknowledged and accepted as part of the critical language of the theory of representation. The objective of the present study is not to produce an ideological analysis of the British crime genre. However, the research does recognize that crime films are ideological, as demonstrated by the presence and absence of what is included in the crime category and the way that it is represented in the media as evidenced by the findings of Allen et al. (1997). But the present research does not seek to make a systematic or 'grand narrative' about the field of study using concepts of ideology, or any other theoretical approach.

3.6.2 The representation of masculinities

In terms of the politics of representation, one of the ways in which competing texts are able to 'produce a satisfying vision of the world' is through discourses about gender, and, in relation to crime films, through the provision of images of masculinity. The importance of masculinity to crime fiction has not been totally ignored. Donald's approach to *The Sweeney*, for instance, is interesting in its addition of psychoanalysis to ideological analysis. In his desire to look beyond the 'gloss of topicality' of the series he privileges its reactionary narrative form over its explicit political content. Regan, *The Sweeney's 'Oedipal Son'*, is a figure that taps into the 'crisis in male self-confidence that marked many films of the period, from pornography to Hollywood's buddy movies', and so he sees the series as being as much about masculinity as it is concerned with the politics of law and order (1985, p.133).

It is interesting also, that in the field of the sociology of literature, Palmer (1991) redresses his omission of gender from his previous analyses of crime fiction. According

to Palmer, crime fiction has both a diversity regulated through subgenres (the 'caper story', 'police procedural', and so on), and a deeper commonality, the centrality of crime. This involves crossing a moral boundary, often involving the violence or force of heroic individualism, where

the positioning of the spectator/reader in relationship to the hero's skills of violence - the aesthetic of admiration - is the modality in which texts of this variety make their distinctive contribution to ideology. (p.135).²³

Since the hero in crime fiction is predominantly male, masculinity is a central discursive element. Palmer illustrates his argument with an analysis of the British crime film *Bellman and True* (1987). In this 'heist film' a weak man, coerced by threat to his family and by the conspiracy of a corrupt woman, becomes involved with a gang of robbers. Thus, his gender identity is threatened, but through violent action he reasserts a more traditional form of masculinity (pp.149-150). Crime fiction, therefore, 'offers a particular definition of what masculinity is' (p.152), and frequently 'male genres celebrate masculinity in terms of toughness and decisive action' (p.150). Thus, the crime film can be seen not so much, in Jeffrey Richards' terms, as an alternative national identity of 'dangerously attractive masculinity', but more as a mainstream cultural arena in which there are competing discourses about gender.

There is not the space to address the issue of masculinity in any great depth, but, as a central discursive context for the study of crime fiction, some elaboration is necessary.²⁴

Connell (1995) provides a comprehensive account of masculinity studies that has particularly influenced criminologists such as Sparks. Following Gramsci, Connell

²³ He provided the example of *The Sweeney*'s prologue which sets up an enigmatic disruption into which Regan and Carter intervene on our behalf to resolve further enigmas and achieve resolution (1991, p.136).

²⁴ For a theoretical discussion of the relationship between masculinity and criminology, see Messerschmidt (1993), and for an introduction or overview, Jefferson (1996; 1997).

develops the concept of multiple masculinities (such as hegemonic and subordinated) in which masculinity and femininity are structures formed and transformed as part of a historical process of change generated from within gender relations in a society of inequality:

A gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change. (1995, p.82).

Alternatively, if one accepts Collins' critique of the dominant, a modification can be made to this hegemonic paradigm by applying a more fragmentary concept of competing masculinities represented in competing aesthetic discourses, but socially and historically determined and possibly subject to the forces of domination, hegemony and subordination, a position that 'acknowledges both the unequal power relations involved in the struggle and at the same time the space for negotiation and resistance from subordinated groups' (Hall, 1997, p.348)

Connell's work allows a greater complexity to be given to the interpretation of genres in the postwar British cinema in which a crisis in masculinity has become a defining characteristic (Street, 1997, pp.61-91), although Geraghty (2000) challenges this view. However, this disagreement relies on a misunderstanding about the concept of 'masculinity in crisis'. Drawing on the work of Jürgen Habermas, Connell distinguishes between the colloquial sense in which people speak of a 'crisis in masculinity' and 'crisis tendencies' because

As a theoretical term 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity...is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of a crisis of a configuration; rather we might speak of its disruption or its transformation. We can, however, logically speak of the crisis of a

gender order as a whole, and of its tendencies towards crisis. (Connell, 1995, p.84).

Furthermore, historically, the major structural change in gender relations

is not the crumbling of the material and institutional structures of patriarchy. What has crumbled, in the industrialised countries is the *legitimation* of patriarchy. (p.226).

If war films and comedies, as Geraghty argues, present more reassuring images of masculinity than seen in other genres in which masculinity appears 'troubled' and in 'crisis', it is because of competing masculinities in the context of challenges to the legitimacy of patriarchy, rather than as responses to a systematic breakdown of gender relations or 'masculinity in crisis'. The function of criticism, therefore, would be to consider the different types of masculinities (and femininities) in crime films in the context of the crisis tendencies in the postwar gender order.

3.6.3 The post-structuralist revision of meaning production

Crime fiction is distinctive because it is about telling stories 'about' crime, although they may be concerned with other things, with recourse to aesthetic forms and strategies. As representation, therefore, crime films link concepts to the real and imaginary worlds to which they refer, and like all representation they *attempt* to make meaning. The shift from the concern for '*how* films mean' to '*what* films mean' is one of post-structuralism. Structuralism's methodologies were widened out by post-structuralism's modes of production and the socio-historical context of production (Hayward, 1996, pp.350-353). However, post-structuralism also problematizes the security of meaning production:

Post-structuralists reject the idea of an underlying structure upon which meaning can rest secure and satisfied. Meaning is always in process. (Storey, 1993, p.85).

From Jacques Derrida, Storey explains how meaning is never fully present, that 'even context cannot fully control meaning' since, for instance, intertextuality carries the traces of other meanings in other contexts (p.86). Post-structuralism is a deconstructive practice, and as such the unity of the text is subjected to a consideration of its parts in relation to 'material of diverse sorts' (Culler, 1983, p.220). The significance of a deconstructive intertextual approach is that the attempt to describe what films mean should not be expected to rely on the unity of the text.

However, although meaning is always in process and signifieds fail to produce closure (p.189), this does not invalidate the effort to interpret. It only draws attention to interpretation as a process, the 'acknowledgement of inadequacy' (p.253), not the acceptance of futility. Meaning is not *in* the text, *but* the text can be used to produce meaning and this is a continual process, and one in which the reference to socio-historical context involves trying to 'fix' the significance of film to the time of its production and reception. This is the theoretical perspective on representation that supports the research. However, in relation to the politics of representation, unlike Hill (1999b), the present study does not take the view that the issues raised by the texts, the discourses of gender and class, and so on, and how they 'activate' texts, are of more concern than the texts themselves. Instead, like Nowell-Smith (2000), it shares the suggestion that how texts are expressive of their referents and how they might connect with spectators is an important concern, and that post-theoretical film studies should 'return to theories of the aesthetic'.

3.7 Summary

This summary addresses the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research that relates to the text and context issues discussed in this chapter. The context for the study of the dramatization of professional crime in British film can be divided into institutional and representational elements. Films are part of an institutional context and this is addressed in Chapter 5. Films also represent their epochs and this is examined in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. In the study of crime films, crime is a central term that refers to both a real activity and its representation and this has ideological significance since

there is no single behaviour covered by the term 'crime', only a range of very different activities, from fiddling tax returns to genocide, only some of which, some of the time, attract the 'criminal' label. (Jefferson, 1997, p.535).

The media is also implicated in the reproduction of social order (Chibnall, 1977; Nellis, 1987; 1988). However, whilst the concept of ideology is a theory that is acknowledged and its operations recognized, its concerns fall outside of the main context of the research.

The present study does not directly address the disciplines of criminology or the sociology of deviance, but it draws upon their concepts, knowledge and methods, for instance, by helping to establish crime as a contested category. Criminological perspectives are also part of the postwar socio-historical context in which crime films refer to law and order discourses or else can be discussed with reference to appropriate vocabulary and concepts. Criminological research also adds pertinent knowledge to the study of British crime film (Allen et al., 1997), and this will be built on in Chapter 5.

Allen et al. (1997) also provides the methodology of combining the quantitative approach of content analysis with more qualitative aspects of textual properties that is used in the research procedures of the thesis. The advantage of this approach is that the representational and generic qualities of film texts can be related to patterns of incidence. These patterns will show how representative these properties are and how those crime films that have content that dramatizes professional crime are proportionate to the crime genre as a whole and to other genres. Quantitative research will be used to establish how much representation there was so that a context can be provided for the consideration of more qualitative textual evidence about the dramatization of professional crime and its place within the institutional context of production. This is addressed in Chapter 5, where discussion of the methodological issues and findings of the study undertaken by Allen et al (1997) are considered in more detail.

As a popular cultural form, the crime film also provides a significant discursive context in which masculinity can be constructed through the dramatization of crime. It is important to draw attention to the gender of crime and its representation in the media because otherwise

the heroism, the villainy, the action and the violence are in a certain sense invisible for as long as they remain unmarked and unremarkable. (Sparks, 1996, p.349).

This is particularly important to postwar British cinema, when from the late forties, films based on women's experiences declined and male problems were a predominant focus (Street, 1997, pp.61-91). Masculinity, therefore, along with the more ostensible referent of law and order, are the two representational discourses that will be analysed as they are reproduced in the dramatization of professional crime, and with reference to the generic organization of British film. This is because it is recommended that genre

provides a conceptual space in which the social significance of film can be pursued, a space where the issues of texts and aesthetics 'intersect with those of industry and institution, history and society, culture and audiences' (Gledhill, 2000, p.221). Thus, the possibility that genre criticism could be used to assist the theory of representation and to contribute to the 'return of the theories of aesthetics' forms the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

GENRE AND THE BRITISH CRIME FILM

This chapter completes the main discussion of the context of investigation with reference to the main methodological and theoretical issues supporting the research. Its aim is consider how genre criticism can be used to address the politics of representation in terms of law and order and masculinity in 'British films' in which professional crime is dramatized. This is also a pertinent discussion to the aesthetic dimension of British cinema more generally. The key question to be considered, therefore, is how genre theory and criticism can be used to study British crime films in the period 1946-1972, but also, by extension, how genre can contribute generally to British cinema studies.

It has been shown that knowledge about genres in British cinema history is very limited, and the preoccupation of academic enquiry has been with the politics of representation. The approach has mainly been a pragmatic one without recourse to the genre theory that has been rehearsed in relation to other cinemas. Genre is now on the agenda of British cinema studies, and rightly so. It is an important structuring mechanism within mainstream cinema (Burton and Petley, 1998), part of the representational and institutional context of film. Genre films are products of particular processes. They are physical texts made by an industrial process, but they are also imaginary texts produced in a discursive process by, for instance, critics and audiences. These aspects will now be examined to explain the place of genre within the research procedures. This is approached with reference to the revision of genre theory and

criticism, genre as aesthetic practice, national cinema and genre, the rhetorical modes of dramatic film, and finally specific crime genres.

4.1 The revision of genre theory and criticism

Genre study is well established within film studies, and ‘has developed its own assumptions, its own *modus operandi*, and its own objects of study’ (Altman, 1999, p.13). After a period of neglect, Altman’s study has been part of a renewed interest and questioning of received definitions and methods, that has also included Gledhill (2000) and Neale (2000). Broadly, there has been a movement away from genres as corpuses of films with unifying textual characteristics, to a more elusive, dynamic and multifaceted conception. The search for types of films and taxonomies has been qualified by the recognition, from linguistics, that all speech-acts are always met in context and therefore subject to ‘the law of genre’; ‘From this perspective, all films, like all linguistic utterances, ‘participate’ (to use Derrida’s term) in genres of one kind or another – and usually in several at once’ (Gledhill, 1999, p.47).

Altman, for instance, shifts slightly from a structural text-based focus, to a more dynamic ‘genrification process’ by recognising the diversity of readers (‘users’), such as spectators, producers, distributors, exhibitors, cultural agencies, academics and critics, and so on. Thus, he suggests, that genre texts owe their existence to the discursivity amongst competing multiple users (1999, p.210). Therefore, instead of clear and stable definitions, a goal of previous genre theorists, he regards genres as elusive and in flux by diverse user groups, in a broad, process-oriented and interactive context.

Neale, however, is less comfortable with discrepancies between different generic categories, for instance between those of the critics and of those in the film industry. He

stresses the importance of detailed empirical research to discover the institutional provenance of genres and the basis of their socio-cultural power. In particular, he argues that evidence of the existence of genres can be found in the industry's 'inter-textual relay', which includes publicity, posters, press books, and review journalism. He argues that only this material is sufficient to begin analysing the history of genre (2000, p.43).

Neale's 'return to history', however, is challenged by Gledhill (2000). There is some agreement between them about the way that a genre's history is about shifts in terminology and discourses (Neale, 2000, p.43), that genre analysis is also about 'the cultural work of producing and knowing them' (Gledhill, 2000, p.3), but Gledhill critiques the 'new historicism' typical of Neale's approach. She expresses a number of concerns about this development, such as the possible return to flawed taxonomy, but her main objection is to the search for empirical authenticity, to explain by seeking origins, and so to fix synchronous meanings at specific moments. The problem she raises, then, was that a study of historical material, such as for instance publicity, only reveals how there is an attempt to position audiences. It does not prove the origin of categories, nor measure the audience's response (2000, p.239). Publicists and reviewers, as Gledhill and Altman would agree, are only some of the many agents who compete to impose meaning on texts.

Gledhill's alternative to 'new historicism' is to stress the ongoing process of making and remaking of meaning, the way that genres are produced through the appropriation of, and struggle with, the past, so that 'through genre production history is never done with' (2000, p.241). In summary, therefore, the conception of genre has moved from a position where the object of study was conceived as being very fixed and specific, to

something more elusive and in flux. Thus, Altman points to the diversity of meaning production in 'users' and Gledhill sees genres as always being in the process of being formed by the 'cultural-critical discursivity' amongst audiences, including critics. In contrast, Neale's 'production of culture perspective' focuses on the institutional framework in which films are devised, produced, distributed, and marketed.¹ Thus, Gledhill's conception of genre is post-structuralist, and therefore the one that most closely corresponds to the theoretical position adopted by the research and established in the previous chapter.

Gledhill also provides a useful summary of what is covered by genre theory and criticism. She identifies three areas that make up the existence of genre: industrial mechanism, aesthetic practice, and cultural-critical discursivity (2000, p.223). Her analysis can be paraphrased thus; films are produced in trends (Balio, 1993), cycles (Alloway, 1971; Altman, 1999; Maltby, 1995), or 'local genres' (Klinger, 1994), rather than genres as such, as a result, for instance, of the film industry's attempts to repeat recent successes or respond to fashions; genre films result from an aesthetic practice in which there is a two-way exchange inside a fictional world between the expectations of generic verisimilitude and society's conventions of social reality;² but genres are fictional worlds with overlapping boundaries, shared images and conventions, so that critics and audiences, or whoever, can make connections through the cultural work of producing and knowing them.

¹ The 'production of culture perspective' focuses on 'the interorganizational network of production companies, distributors, mass media gatekeepers, and retailers' and the conflicts among them, as well as on 'the market, pressure groups and censorship, statute law, governments, and technology', and all the other factors that contribute to generic production (Kapsis, 1991, p. 700; Neale, 2000, p.228).

² In this context Gledhill uses the term realism as 'a modality which makes a claim on the real', whereas Neale used 'cultural verisimilitude' as a substitution for realism (Gledhill, 2000, p.235).

At this stage in the development of genre theory and criticism, therefore, Gledhill identifies three distinct aspects that, either individually or in combination, can be taken forward into British cinema studies. Genre studies, as Gledhill puts forward, are concerned with the question of finding ways to articulate textual understanding and cinematic experience, but there is potential conflict between the three areas of explication, between the historical evidence of production and publicity, conceptions of aesthetic practice, and competitive critical values (2000, p.239). Although any of these enquiries and the relationships between them would constitute a worthwhile focus, it is the aesthetic dimension that will be put forward as the principle concern of the present study, and so this issue will now be discussed.

4.2 Genre as aesthetic practice

The aesthetic dimension of genre is the key to understanding the politics of representation in popular film. The analysis of genre as aesthetic practice relies upon a number of important terms that will now be elaborated. The first of these is verisimilitude as discussed by Neale (2000) and Geldhill (2000). For Neale, verisimilitude means 'probable', 'plausible' or 'likely'. It is the quality of appearing true or real, rather than equating to problematic likenesses to 'truth' or 'reality'. It is a term that he believes encapsulates the cinema's ability to 'copy' or record the real world as it is perceived or believed to be using differentiated formal conventions. Influenced by Todorov's (1981, pp.118-119) identification of two basic verisimilitudes, generic and social or cultural, he suggests that verisimilitudes are organised in regimes of rules, norms and laws that vary from genre to genre. He also draws on the work on literary genres of Culler, who makes a similar distinction between the two verisimilitudes. Thus,

Culler proposes that 'To understand the language of a text is to recognize the world to which it refers' (1975, p.135) and that the conventions of a genre 'are essentially possibilities of meaning, ways of naturalizing the text and giving it a place in the world which our culture defines' (p.137). In other words, they can help to deconstruct the relationship between the representation of criminality or masculinity as it is perceived in reference to the real world or to the world of the imagination and as it is transformed by or inscribed within specific films or genres as part of the signification process of representation.

Culler argues that for a theory of genres to be more than a taxonomy it must attempt to explain the intertextuality of different categories or discourses that govern the way that a text is read and written, or in cinematic terms, how a film is made and viewed. The conception of films in terms of different categories of verisimilitude or 'vraisemblance', of systems and forms of plausibility, motivation and beliefs, aids this process. Films are subject to both broad rhetorical modes of generic and cultural verisimilitude, in the context of specific historical attempts by film-makers to connect with audiences, and of attempts by audiences and critics to apply their values to them.

Gledhill also incorporates the concept of verisimilitude into her model of genre culture, but with some modifications. She accepts the definitions of cultural verisimilitude as the representation of conventional social reality, and generic verisimilitude as the expectation of fictional worlds. However, whereas Neale proposes that genres were made up of balances between the verisimilitudes, Gledhill uses the metaphor of a dialogue between them inside the fictional worlds of genre. She suggests

that at the boundaries between culture and aesthetics, 'society talks to itself', that genres circulate 'as representations of ourselves within cultural verisimilitude' (2000, p.238).

Gledhill adds that the way that social and aesthetic questions are brought together in genres is through the organizing modalities of realism and melodrama, defined respectively as the 'modality that makes a claim on the real', and as the modality whose aesthetic articulation is to 'make the world morally legible' (pp.227-235). She is particularly concerned that Neale substitutes cultural verisimilitude for realism because she believes that the realist mode contributes to the shifting conventions of verisimilitude. However, her specific emphasis is to stress the crucial development of melodrama in the modern genre system (p.222). Thus, a connection is made here to the significant strand, as established in Chapter 2, that has been identified as a property of British cinema, but one that is rarely discussed in a sustained way.

Gledhill refers to melodrama, not as a singular genre, but as a hybrid mode that draws on other modes such as comedy, romance and realism, and whose role she describes as a 'genre machine'. She assigns it a double function in a two-way process. Melodrama produces moral identities, through, for instance, the clash of opposites, that are allowed by ideological conditions and conventional representation of what society takes to be reality. Also, however, the aesthetic products of this genre culture give back to society emotional experience and moral perceptions (p.240).

Finally, Collins (1989) provides a slightly different, though compatible perspective. He concludes that the inability of film theory to account for ideological complexity in popular cinema is especially apparent in genre study (p.89). He approaches this problem from the direction of 'filmic enunciation' in the context of his advancement of the

competition among discursive ideologies and the promotion of privileged modes of representation.³ He looks beyond the discursivity involved in enunciation to the way that films connect with audiences by presupposing the audience's familiarity with the signifiers or conventions of the discourse. He refers to this as 'discursiveness', 'the effect of belonging to a specific discourse', for instance 'the Gothic' or 'hard-boiled fiction', and that rival discourses foreground their differences to produce 'satisfying representations of life' for audiences (pp.105-108). In other words, these are the fictional worlds of generic and cultural verisimilitudes. Collins' emphasises how, at the core of popular culture, discursiveness is competitive and diverse, but that this diversity is dependent on the institutions of the medium (p.111). Thus, in this way, aesthetic practice can be related to its historical institutional context.

The aesthetic practice of genre, then, is characterised by modes of representation, or organizing modalities, that are the mechanisms for the formation of genres out of the production and reception of film texts. Genres consist of regimes of generic and cultural verisimilitudes, and they are discursive sites where the social and the aesthetic are brought together. The formation of genres is an ongoing critical activity amongst audiences and academics, as they attempt to respond to, or organize texts into, discrete genres. Genre study is a difficult, shifting, but fascinating problematic, but potentially useful for thinking about the politics of representation and theories of the aesthetic.

³ The study of filmic enunciation is concerned with attempts to theorise the discursive relationship between the text and the spectator, in terms of how the text positions the spectator, as in the work of Metz (1982). Typically, this involves the analysis of the tense in which the narration unfolds, or whether the spectator is addressed by pronouns, such as in an 'I-You' relationship.

4.3 Genre and national cinema

All aspects of genre impinge on the politics of representation, from the industrial mechanisms such as the inter-textual relay, through aesthetic practice to critical discursivity. Genre is also, as Gledhill observes, a 'boundary phenomenon' (2000, p.221), and therefore subject to inevitable disputes. These specific relationships and problems will be addressed with specific reference to questions of representation.

The application of genre theory and criticism is an effective way of investigating the representational context of popular cinema. In relation to the dramatization of professional criminality in the British crime film, the two key aspects of the politics of representation that have been identified are masculinity and law and order. These areas will be approached firstly by reference to genre generally and then more specifically in relation to genre and crime. Before that, however, the approach to the wider context of national cinema and identity will be appraised.

It was established in the review of literature for British cinema studies that national identity has been a particular preoccupation. For instance, it is suggested that the British cinema has a distinctive set of national genres stemming from a long history of popular culture, especially crime and horror (Ryall, 1998, p.23). Similarly, Chapman makes claims for the war film being the British equivalent of the western (1998a, p.72). However, using a case study of war films in the 1950s, it is argued that the genre had a fluid boundary between 'British' and 'American' identities as a result of its institutional context (Porter, 1998, pp.30-31). Likewise, Higson (1995) claims that there are a number of British genres with indigenous strengths, but also that there is hybridity with American cinematic traditions (p.22).

Questions of national cinema and genre, then, are problematic. The problem with establishing the existence of indigenous traditions is one of essence. How can one identify the origins or purity of form given the flow, the diaspora of ideas, people or modes of representation? There are obvious outward signs of cultural hybridity, such as the use of American actors, but what of 'deeper' structures such as narrative and style? How can one identify and quantify how imitative the British crime film is of the generic and cultural verisimilitudes, of for instance, Hollywood cinema?

These issues have been examined, for example, by Brunsdon (1999) and Pulleine (1999). In Pulleine's survey of 'spiv movies' of the late 1940s, for instance, he uses a notion of generic hybridity to infer that they are mainly indigenous films that have a tendency to imitate American cinema, and particularly *noir*. Thus, for example *Noose* (1948) is seen as being not quite integrated enough to be British *noir*, but *They Made Me a Fugitive* is pre-eminently indigenous *noir* in narrative and style (1999, pp.29-31). This is illuminating because it illustrates one of Gledhill's three aspects of genre criticism, that of 'competitive critical values' or, in Collins' terms, 'discursiveness'. Pulleine's critical discourse is that he wants to claim an authentic British cinema using a generic category developed intertextually primarily in relation to American cinema.

Brunsdon's approach, however, is a more thorough examination of generic hybridity, although with some limitations. Her structuralist methodology focuses on the construction of 'space' and how it is inscribed in film texts, and she identifies two kinds of space - firstly, the dominant generic space of Hollywood, especially *noir*, and secondly the 'literal' space of the English location. From our contemporary perspective, the symbolic power of *noir* perhaps makes it an unavoidable reference point for making

crime films intelligible, but perhaps there are other verisimilitudes to consider. For example, might the *noirish* space identified by Brunsdon in *It Always Rains on Sunday* also be seen as expressionist moments of melodramatic revelation of moral character? However, what Brunsdon demonstrates is that 'the British underworld film is locked into a permanent struggle with the conventions of the Hollywood gangster genre' (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999, p.12), but in her model we are only offered Hollywood generic space, whereas indigenous traditions mainly contribute the literal spaces of location. Does British cinema, too, have indigenous generic space?

The subject of national cinema, national identity and indigenous genres is a problematic worthy of its own investigation and therefore beyond the parameters of this particular study. However, some methodological clarity is needed. In terms of aesthetic practice and critical discursivity, and because of shared institutional frameworks and cultural intertextuality, British films draw upon the discursiveness of American genres. Therefore, in generic terms, film-makers, audiences and critics are likely to engage with the plausible fictional worlds of generic verisimilitude in the representation of crime, such as *noir* or the Hollywood gangster film, as exemplified by Pulleine (1999). It is inevitable that in the critical discursive process of describing crime films generically, that one will rely on established generic identities such as *noir* and this is a valid and reasonable approach. Genre criticism relies on intertextual knowledge to deconstruct textual properties as part of a valid process of constructing meaning and for anyone involved in popular film culture, as creator, viewer or critic, this is bound to. However, it is important to differentiate between the use of descriptive generic categories to deconstruct meanings activated by the text, an approach that is adopted by the present

study, and the use of the concept of indigenous genres to construct notions of national cinema, which is not a rationale or objective of the investigation.

4.4 Genre and the rhetorical modes of dramatic film

Genre, then, is not just a question of aesthetic practice, but of the critical values that are applied to it. This is particularly significant with reference to gender values. Gledhill, for example, in relation to the cinema after sound, describes how genre divisions in criticism allowed melodrama a separate identity along gender lines, so that 'classic' genres such as the gangster as 'tragic hero', the 'epic' west and 'adult' realism were constructed by recourse to masculine cultural values and melodrama was marginalised as juvenile, popular and feminine (1987, pp.34-35).

The gangster genre, for example, has occupied a central position within the development of a masculinist genre theory and it has become the definitive crime film. The 'gangster/crime' genre is often privileged in terms of its realism in reflecting a basic reality, for instance the idea that the 'history of the gangster film is in a sense the history of crime in the United States' (Kellner, 1998, p.358). In addition to realism, the gangster film has also been discussed with high cultural seriousness because it has been seen as a form of tragedy (Warshow, 1970). However, Gledhill challenges this view because she sees it as a melodramatic form concerned with secular morality rather than the sacred moral universe of tragedy, challenges this view (1999, pp.178-179).

This revisionism of 'classical' realist Hollywood cinema has also taken place within 'new historicism'. Neale, for instance, addresses how in film studies melodrama is a term that has become associated since the early seventies with a set of subgenres such as the 'woman's film', 'family melodrama' and the 'weepie'. However, in Hollywood's

inter-textual relay of the forties, in the discourses of publicists, reviewers and production personnel, he finds that it was a term that was used to refer to 'male' genres of action. Melodrama and melodramatic meant

crime, guns and violence; they meant heroines in peril; they meant action, tension and suspense; and they meant villains, villains who in "cheap melodrama", at any rate, could masquerade as "apparently harmless" fellows, thus thwarting the hero, evading justice, and sustaining suspense until the last minute. (2000, p.179).

The importance of these debates is that it illustrates how critical values are crucial to the interpretation of aesthetic practice. It is therefore necessary to make these values explicit by clarifying the approach to be taken, and this will be done firstly with reference to the aesthetic modes that contribute to genre films. The primary rhetorical modes of dramatic film in the period under study are realism, modernism and melodrama. The realist aesthetic is based on the confidence that the world can be represented or explained as it is, or as it is believed to be. Stylistically this can take many forms, but it is driven 'to possess the world by understanding it' (Gledhill, 1997, p.33). The modernist mode, however, explores what is perceived as the inadequacy of other modes to represent the world and updates or modernises aesthetic practice with modified or new conventions. Finally, melodrama's rhetoric is to construct moral legibility in aesthetic form. Melodrama 'is structured upon the "dual recognition" of how things are and how they should be' (Williams, 1998, p.48), it is 'an allegory of human experience dramatically ordered, as it should be rather than as it is' (Booth, 1965, p.14).

Being able to define generic categories, however, does not always prevent boundary disputes such as those over some Hollywood action genres that have been theoretically and empirically shown to be indebted to the melodramatic mode, but which have been

claimed as realism. The modes of representation, then, are vulnerable to subjective interpretation, but they do provide a means of discussing the significance of popular cinema genres. This is an important discussion because the British crime film has been largely excluded from the 'core' of social realism and ignored in the subsequent studies of the more 'fantastic borderlands' of British genres. Thus, it is possible that the neglect of the genre and the limiting dichotomy of realism-fantasy (Chapter 2) could be addressed by analysing the use of cultural and generic verisimilitude to dramatize crime with reference to the rhetorical modes of dramatic film.

The identity of the British crime film, however, is always likely to be a contested category because, as Gledhill (1987) argues, realism and melodrama cover the same terrain. This produces a heterogeneous aesthetic of conflict or interdependence between melodrama and realism in which melodrama answers the demand for significance through the moral legibility of symbolic characters, events and relationships, but in conjunction with 'realism's ever shifting criteria of relevance and credibility' in the presentation of everyday life (p.37).

This shared terrain is particularly significant for the study of gender representation. In film studies the field of melodrama has been dominated by consideration of the representation of women, but the idea of masculine melodrama has become an important critical discourse. The recognition of the melodramatic mode has been brought to bear on a broad range of genres in which the public spheres of masculine action have been seen as arenas where male affective experience can be conventionalised. For instance, Jenkins (1997) argues that American television wrestling is a form of masculine melodrama, and Stringer (1997) suggests that the

‘anxious gangster films of John Woo’ are male melodramas that involve ‘doing and suffering’, action and emotion (p.30). *Film noir* has also been re-thought as male melodrama (Jacobowitz, 1992; Krutnik, 1991; Thomas, 1992), in which typically a conflict is presented between what men want and what society sanctions for them. This is clearly melodramatic rhetoric about the recognition of ‘how things are’ and ‘how they should be’.

If, therefore, the ‘taciturnity of masculine realism is the seedbed of melodramatic emotion’ (Gledhill, 2000, p.236) it is essential to establish the characteristics of the melodramatic mode so that the applicable difference between the modes of melodrama and realism can be used with confidence, before progressing to a consideration of individual crime genres. Although the study of film melodrama has drawn on the origins of the theatrical form, the standard definitions of melodrama have arisen from feminist discussion of melodramatic genres such as the woman’s film, the family melodrama and tragic melodrama. However, as it has been established, it is revised as being the ‘fundamental progenitor of nearly all of Hollywood’s non-comic genres’ (Neale, 2000, p.202). Both of these conceptions, then, have emerged by reference to the American cinema, and although it is the feminist conception that has been dominant,⁴ it is in this latter sense as a more general melodramatic mode that the term will be applied.

For Linda Williams the key distinctions of melodrama’s modality of narrative are ‘action’ and ‘pathos’ (1998, p.58). Towards the pathos side, ‘victim-heroes...achieve recognition of their virtue through the more passive “deeds” of suffering or self-

⁴ Harper (1987), for instance, argues that the standard definition of melodrama did not accurately describe the Gainsborough costume films of the 1940s. Landy (1991) also mainly used melodrama as a genre, although she recognised it as a mode. She noted that the ‘tragic melodrama’ was especially prolific in British cinema (pp.237-284), of which nearly half her examples were crime films, although this fact was not discussed.

sacrifice', and towards the action side, 'more active hero-victims either solve problems through action...or are themselves rescued from some fix' (pp.59-60). Following Brooks (1976) and Gledhill (1987), Williams recognises that the persistence of melodrama demonstrates 'a need to forge some semblance of truth and morality' (p.51), and it does so by making morality visible in sensational scenes where true villainy and wronged innocence are revealed and felt (p.52).

As a summary, then, Williams has identified five qualities that are central to the melodramatic mode. Three of them have been alluded to already; the focus on victim-heroes and their virtue, the dialectic of pathos and action, and characters that embody psychic roles organized in Manichean conflicts between good and evil. The remaining two qualities concern melodrama's propensity to both look backwards and to be up-to-date in order to make the world morally legible. Williams stresses the importance of the desire for a lost innocence in American melodrama, the 'fundamental reason for melodrama's profound conservatism' (p.65). Similarly, Gledhill notes how melodrama's 'search for something lost, inadmissible, repressed, ties it to an atavistic past', 'a past that could be recalled to reincarnate moral conflict contemporary society believed it had outgrown', but also accommodates changing standards of realism (1987, pp.31-32).

4.5 Crime genres

Aesthetic practice and critical discursivity, however, are not just confined to modes of dramatization, but also involve attempts to make specific types of genre films, or to organize texts into individual genres. The construction of imaginary genres by film-makers, audiences, and critics through making connections between the fictional worlds of different film texts provides a significant interpretative context because it is a cultural process of making and remaking meaning. The most relevant genres that need to be addressed are those that have been concerned with the dramatization of crime, and these will now be examined to demonstrate the critical discursivity involved in the use of individual crime genres in order to qualify their usefulness.

One genre in which crime is a significant content is the 'social problem film'. Neale, however, suggests that it is 'essentially a critical invention', and a problematic one because it is recognisable but cross-generic (2000, pp.112-117). In relation to British cinema, Hill uses the term to group together films in the period 1956-1963 whose concern is 'to raise topical social issues within a commercial cinematic form', topics such as juvenile delinquency, prostitution, homosexuality and race (1986, p.67). He acknowledges that not all the films he discusses are strictly social problem films, but he is prepared to under-emphasise formal differences between the group to discuss the broad patterns of ideological meanings.

Landy also uses the social problem film as a critical category to generate support for ideological readings. She sees it as a genre that dramatizes 'social analysis as conflict', but in an eclectic style 'fusing melodrama, docudrama and social realism' (1991, p.432).

Her twenty-three social problem films include fourteen 'crime' films⁵ and her attempts to deal with them within this category are debatable. For example, one could agree with the suggestion that *The Intruder* is not a crime film, but 'uses criminality as its melodramatic ploy to develop its concern with maladjustment and the need for rehabilitation, a common strategy of the social problem film' (p.441). However, the idea that *Brighton Rock* is a social problem film that is only 'ostensibly concerned with crime detection' and whose 'concern is finally less with the social aspects of crime, with legal crime and punishment, than with the underlying psychology of male and female marginality' (pp.443-444), is less convincing. Landy's desire to focus on 'youthful rebellion' as a social problem under-emphasises the film's use of 'the conventions of the gangster film at a cultural moment when the problems of crime and punishment loomed larger than the problems of poverty and unemployment' (Chibnall, 2000, p.138). As a critical category, therefore, the social problem genre does have explanatory power, but there is a danger of only seeing certain crimes as being social problems. Juvenile crime is a 'social problem', but professional crime it would appear is not.

Neale identifies three principal types of Hollywood genres that deal with contemporary crime: the detective film with its 'focus on an agent of investigation and its emphasis on detection', the gangster film with its 'focus on the perpetrators of crime and its emphasis on criminal activity', and the suspense thriller with its 'focus on the victims of crime and its emphasis on their response' (2000, p.72). He qualifies this

⁵ If one uses Gifford's classifications (1986), the crime films are; *The Blue Lamp* (1950), *The Boys in Brown* (1949), *Brighton Rock* (1947), *Cage of Gold* (1950), *Good Time Girl* (1948), *I Believe in You* (1952), *The Intruder* (1953), *Pool of London* (1951), *Sapphire* (1959), *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955), *Victim* (1961), *The Weak and the Wicked* (1954), *The Yellow Balloon* (1952), and *Yield to the Night* (1956).

schema by stressing the possibility of overlap in individual cycles and films, but concludes nevertheless that they are distinct tendencies.

The detective film has not attracted many case studies, especially in the British context. Everson (1972) provides a survey of British detective films, but it is a very incomplete and disorganized 'list' of detectives in films, rather than being about 'detective films'. Prior to *Gosford Park* (2001), it has been an unfashionable genre in contemporary cinema, although historically the 'murder mystery' of detective fiction has been a frequent source material for middlebrow culture in British cinema. There is no mystery, however, about the form since it is one of the most formulaically recognisable of genres.⁶

In contrast to the detective film, the gangster film has occupied a privileged place in genre theory (Neale, 2000, p.76), but histories of the genre tend to be limited and selective about choosing which films aesthetically and socially fit the theories or models being propounded (p.77). Central to attempts to construct a 'gangster formula', for instance, has been the use of the 'holy trinity' of 'classic' gangster films of the early thirties as a pattern to which all other films are related.⁷ However, the history of the gangster genre, as Neale argues, is one of constant change 'marked more by abrupt and intermittent transformations and short-lived cycles than by smoothly evolving continuities' (p.79).

Traditionally, the evolution of the gangster genre has been attributed to reflections of changing contemporary reality and considered for its ideological significance in

⁶ Todorov (1977) used the 'murder mystery' to illustrate verisimilitude and argues that it is a form that deliberately flaunts the plausibility of the real world in which the chief suspect is proved innocent, for instance, as part of its generic verisimilitude. This point is discussed by Neale (2000, pp.33-34).

⁷ *Little Caesar* (1930), *The Public Enemy* (1931), and *Scarface* (1932). See, for example the section on gangster films in Schatz (1981).

American culture. Central to this has been the iconic figure of the gangster and the link between the gangster film and capitalist ideology. Munby (1999), for instance, believes that the gangster mythology endures because of 'its adverse power to dramatise an American idealism at odds with itself' (p.3), and that its effect, particularly in class and ethnic terms, is to expose 'the dark side of Anglo-America' (p.5). In comparison to the detective film, which, perhaps with the exception of the hard-boiled tradition, is regarded as a rather conservative form, the gangster genre is seen as something potentially more radical and progressive because of the association of gangsterism as the perversion of individualism in the capitalist system. As an illegal businessman, the figure of the gangster offers the possibility of allegorical or metaphorical equivalences of deviancy with normative wealth and power acquisition, or right and left-handed forms of human endeavour as it is expressed in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950).

The American gangster genre, then, is a dominant paradigm for British audiences and film-makers, and by comparison the British gangster film lacks a widely recognised indigenous profile. Two recent reference books show how the British gangster film has struggled for identification against the American paradigm. Mottram (1998) contains 200 entries on individual films, eighteen of which are British and the rest predominantly American, whereas Hardy (1998) is more comprehensive with 105 British films out of an international (twenty-six countries) selection of 1,500 entries.⁸ Hardy's book is more successful in addressing the relationship between the American genre and other cinemas. Mottram relies on the traditional realist approach that stresses Warshowian tragedy and the reflection of social and political history. However, although Hardy's

⁸ Mottram chose only four films released before 1970 (*Brighton Rock* (1947), *The Ladykillers* (1955), *The Frightened City* (1961), and *The Italian Job* (1969)). Hardy's choices more accurately reflect the incidence of crime films prior to the 1970s with 78 entries from the 1930s to the 1960s, and the leading decade is the 1950s with 33 titles.

book is dominated by American examples, it is more detailed about other traditions, and is more sophisticated in its use of genre. In his introduction, he suggests that the gangster film is about public, organized crime 'concerned with aggrandisement, ambition and the disruption of the social order', whereas other crime films deal with more private, individualised crimes (1998, p.7). Like Neale, he acknowledges the problems of conceptualising the gangster genre, and opts for a fluid conception supported by a quote from Durgnat (1991), that the 'gangster genre has no structural unity: it's a historical...conjunction, normally in mutation' (Hardy, 1998, p.8). In this sense, the gangster is more iconic than generic.

Hardy gives only brief consideration to non-American gangster films, suggesting that 'Outside America the gangster film had a radically different identity' (p.12). Italian postwar films, for example, are political in examining the corruption in national reconstruction, and in Japan there are strongly indigenous social concerns. Britain is seen as the country 'most dramatically affected by its cultural proximity to Hollywood' (p.12), but through inhibition as opposed to indigenous imitation. He argues that strong censorship 'meant that American models could not simply be adapted for local usage', that 'the gangster film in Britain was largely sidelined' and that 'the best British gangster films have been oddities, marginal films made with wit and verve by the locals...or fresh views through foreign eyes' (p.13). In other words, the distinctiveness of British gangster films is marked by their eccentricity caused by the inability of filmmakers to appropriate American forms and, consequently, unlike other countries, Britain does not develop a strong indigenous tradition comparable to French poetic realism or Japanese yakuza films. And this eclecticism is reflected in some of the entries

chosen for the book.⁹ On the whole, then, the British gangster film is an impoverished critical construct, whilst the American gangster is a pervasive cultural icon readily available as an intertextual reference to aspiring film-makers and critics alike.

Neale's third principal crime genre is the suspense thriller. Used generically, it is a term that is just as problematic as the gangster film, but for different reasons. Whereas the coherence of the gangster genre is challenged by the diversity of criminal-centred films gathered together to construct its history, the thriller is a contentious genre. Neale bases his discussion of the suspense thriller around two main sources, Derry (1988) and Dove (1989). The former provides him with the definition that 'Suspense thrillers focus either on victims of crime or on pursued and isolated criminals', with a lack of attention to official detectives or the police' (Neale, 2000, p.82). The other source supplies a structural analysis of all forms of suspense consisting of four phases of story development.¹⁰ Again, like the detective film, how information and knowledge are fed to the spectator in the process of narration, creating mystery, or in this case, particularly suspense centred on speculations about what might happen next, is an indication of a thriller's generic identity.

There has been debate about the generic boundary between the thriller and the detective film (Rubin, 1999). Palmer argues, for instance, that the 'tough thriller' of hard-boiled fiction and the classic detective story, despite surface differences of form, are the same genre, the thriller, that there is 'no fundamental difference between the

⁹ Good examples would be Warwick's *In the Nick* and its sequel *Jazz Boat* (both 1960), with their 'bizarre mixture of comedy, crime and music' (Hardy, 1998, p.186).

¹⁰ The four phases are; 'cumulation' (the building up of clues, questions or tensions for future development); 'postponement' (the deferment of early resolution); 'alternation' (the creation of doubt through uncertain outcomes); and 'potentiality' (the movement towards a potential outcome through a crisis) (Dove, 1989:50).

modern thriller and the traditional detective story' (p.106). Thrillers, according to Palmer, have: a conspiracy, a competitive hero, the process of suspense, conventions such as the distinction between amateur, professional and bureaucrat, a kerygmatic encounter (a 'brush' with the villain or their conspiracy) and the inhumanity of the villain (p.100). Essentially, his central premise is that the 'thriller plot consists simply of the hero defeating a conspiracy' (Rubin, 1999, p.11). Rubin's critique of this is that it is both 'too loose and too restrictive' (p.12). Too slack because it includes the whodunnit which does not qualify under Rubin's definition of the thriller, and so narrow as to exclude what others would see as 'classic thrillers'.¹¹

Rubin conceptualised the thriller as a 'metagenre' giving colour to particular genres such as the spy thriller. He saw the thriller as being characterised by oppositions and doubling, such as control-vulnerability, familiarity-unfamiliarity, and realism-fantasy. He also referred to the labyrinth as a metaphor for storytelling in the thriller because of the way that they both create suspension (p.32). This metaphor helped him to distinguish between the classical/whodunnit detective story and the detective thriller. In the latter, the hero is embroiled in the mystery, not standing outside of it dispassionately, but caught in its 'mazelike' plot structures (p.202). This again illustrates the use of 'competitive critical values', in which, for instance, a film such as *The Big Sleep* (1946), is a tough thriller (Palmer, 1978), a detective thriller (Rubin, 1999), or a detective film (Neale, 2000).

In relation to the British cinema and the thriller, only the 1930s, a period that is described as 'a golden age of the British film thriller' (Chapman, 1998a, p.75), have attracted any significant attention. Chapman signals the problem of using a term that

¹¹ Rubin suggests examples such as Grahame Greene's novel *The Confidential Agent* (1939) and the films *Psycho* (1960) and *The Parallax View* (1974) would be outside of Palmer's conception of the thriller.

lacks precise boundaries, but like Rubin (1999) and Ryall (1986), he draws attention to its literary origins and 'double world'. Ryall identifies the thriller as a genre within the broad category of the crime film, and focuses on the sub-genre of the spy thriller.

Chapman, however, considers a wider range of films using a loose conception of the thriller genre with a number of narrative 'types' or 'trends' within it.¹² His concern is primarily with the discourses of national identity evidenced in the characters of the English gentleman heroes and foreign villains (p.90). He concludes that it is an indigenous genre that has been marginalized within British cinema history (p.97).

Marginal, yes, but it is hardly an indigenous form. As Rubin points out, the thriller is historically and culturally a modern bourgeois and predominantly western form (1999, p.266). Edgar Wallace's master criminals are contemporaneous with Louis Feuillade's Fantômas and Fritz Lang's Mabuse. They might be distinguished by national inflections, but the eruption of the 'chaos world' is basically the same. Although the thriller is a term that can be used to refer to individual genres, there is also a sense in which it is a transnational mode of representation committed to action and suspense.

The final crime genre to be discussed in relation to the pertinent context of the present study is *film noir*, a problematic category because of uncertainty about the nature of what it refers to (Neale, 2000, pp.151-177). Neale concludes that 'As a single phenomenon, *noir*...never existed' (p.173). As a consequence, any attempts to explain or interpret its ideological significance are undermined by the insuperable problems of bringing coherence to distinct and heterogeneous elements (pp.153-154). Ideological interpretation of *noir* by critics, he suggests, generally identifies a 'mood' linked to social and cultural factors that both define and account for it. In particular, the treatment

¹² For instance, the 'horrific or macabre' trend, the 'great detective/master criminal narrative', or the 'spy or espionage narrative'.

of 'troubled' sexuality and gender, with different emphases, is seen as one of its defining characteristics.¹³ However, Neale argues against the homogenisation of tendencies and trends under the heading of *noir* because the features associated with the form crossed a wide variety of types of films in the forties and fifties (p.174).

As a discursive construct then, there is a problem about using a conception of *noir* as a genre. There is a danger, as Neale rightly argues, of taking films away from their immediate cyclical and generic contexts, and so depleting genre's explanatory power. However, *noir* is a term used in contemporary film culture with great agreement about, and understanding of, its conventions. It has not only become a genre that might be labelled *neo-noir* or *post-noir*, but also an imaginary genre that can be applied retrospectively to films of the 1940s and 1950s when viewing them today.

Miller (1994) and Tony Williams (1999) argue for the existence of British *noir*. Miller's approach is taxonomic. He identifies 331 British *noirs* released between 1940 and 1959, contextualised by thirteen themes, such as 'Revenge, vengeance' and 'Amnesia', and illustrated with fifty-one examples. These are all contemporary crime features, apart from historical costume films such as *Gaslight* (1940) and *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (1945), and some shorts, including *Fatal Journey* (1954) and *Dollars for Sale* (1955). Both Miller and Williams identify *noirs* in similar ways, by referring to distinctive visual style and consistent themes. Neither of them claims *film noir* as a genre. Miller sees it as a cycle, whereas for Williams it is a style or a movement. This allows Williams to be cross-generic by including costume films and Gainsborough melodramas in the category.

¹³ See for example Damico (1978), Kaplan (1978), Krutnik, (1991), Jacobowitz (1992), and Thomas (1992).

Conventionally, Williams associates ideological issues with expressionistic techniques. He sees *film noir* as a movement with stylistic excess that coincides with periods of social and cultural disturbance. In postwar Britain, he suggests that factors such as rigid class barriers and 'male trauma and insecurity' were culturally significant (p.255). His examples for earlier films, such as those films featuring psychologically maladjusted male protagonists played by actors such as James Mason and Eric Portman, cover 'old' ground explored by Durgnat (1970; 1997), Murphy (1989) and Landy (1991), with very little revision or to greater effect. Miller's conclusion that 'Each cycle share many characteristics, while at the same time being distinctly British or distinctly American' (Miller, 1994:163)' is just very weak.

The main question that arises out of the use of the term *noir* in these ways is whether there is a need to use it at all. Not only does this use of *noir* illustrate Neale's argument about the problems caused by the gathering of heterogeneous phenomena under a homogeneous label, but it also leads to questionable periodisation and 'pigeon-holing' of films. Miller used 1940-1959 as the period of British *noir* only because it is the established phase of the American cycle. His counting of specific examples for each year allows him to conclude that whereas in America *film noir* was in steady decline from a peak in 1950, in Britain the peak years were 1956 and 1957 (1994, p.161). Does this, for instance, mean that Britain experienced a more prolonged post-traumatic social and cultural disturbance than that of postwar America? What happened in 1960 to bring about the end of *noir* in Britain? Williams did not give an end date, but he insisted that it started with *The Green Cockatoo*, and therefore that it predated American *noir* (1999, p.245). His disagreement with Everson's suggestion that British *noir* began with *They*

Drive By Night (1987, pp.287-289) shows how critical values are competitive and generic boundaries are always shifting.

There is a danger that the use of *noir* can be rather redundant if it does not add to the explanatory power that can be provided by suitable generic contexts. What such criticism demonstrates is a desire to 'discover' and establish British *noir*, like its American counterpart, as a phenomenon rich in ideological issues and bravura expressionism. *Film noir* continues to attract academic attention because it is a field of study with considerable and enduring artistic and cultural cachet. *Noir's* persistence as an idea, as a far-reaching organizing principal for discussing films suggests that it is a category with real resonance for critics, audiences and film-makers, and therefore a useful term, despite its problematic status and one therefore that has valid intertextual currency. It is 'an unusually baggy concept', but one with 'heuristic value' (Naremore, 1998, pp.5-6).

The discussion of the individual genres of the social problem film, the detective film, the gangster film, the thriller and *film noir* has been used here to show that they are sometimes elusive categories. They are not the only crime genres, for one could add several more such as the prison film, the caper or heist film, the courtroom drama, and so on. The crucial point, however, is the acknowledgement that the creation of taxonomies of individual genres is a flawed procedure because of the lack of clear and stable definitions, but the recourse to specific genres highlights the signification process in popular culture. Films are hybrid in the sense that they do participate in several genres at once, so the appropriate generic context for understanding them is to identify

what verisimilitudes or plausible worlds seem to be the most pertinent for textual analysis (Ryall, 1998b, p.3336).

4.5 Summary

Genre theory and criticism has relied upon Hollywood cinema studies so there is a need to be tentative about its application to British cinema, particularly with regard to problematic individual genres and the masculinist perspective that has privileged realism in the construction of genres such as the gangster film. The revision of genre theory and criticism proposes a conception of genre that shifts away from taxonomic categories or 'fixed' genres to one in which they are created through dynamic boundary disputes in critical discourse. Genre films, as Gledhill (2000) suggests, can be analysed in terms of their aesthetic practice as fictional worlds in which there is a 'dialogue' between generic and cultural verisimilitude (society's conventions of social reality) and in which the rhetorical modes of dramatic film, particularly melodrama and realism, are conventions of perception and aesthetic articulation. Individual genres such as *film noir* are contested categories, but usually there is sufficient understanding of and agreement about their frames of reference to be of value to the description and interpretation of texts. It is also important to note that films are often characterised by hybridity so that they participate in several genres at once.

The theoretical approach to genre underpinning the research, as also with reference to the theory of representation presented in the previous chapter, adheres to post-structuralism. Genre is a process-oriented activity of unstable definitions (Altman, 1999) with the ongoing and remaking of meaning (Gledhill, 2000). Genre criticism involves competitive 'cultural-critical discursivity' (p.223) or 'discursiveness' (Collins,

1989, pp.105-106). Conceptually, there is a paradox that films belong to no genre.

Rather, they *participate* in genre:

Though it always participates in genre, a text belongs to no genre, because the frame or trait is not a part of the genre it designates...a framing device which asserts or manifests class membership is not itself a member of that class. (Culler, 1983, p.196)

Thus, when describing films generically, such as for instance, that 'this film is a heist film', this really means that 'this film participates in the heist film'. Films participate in the conceptual generic categories in which specific texts are regarded as being intertextual members.

The practical application of this genre theory is in accordance with the purposes and scope of the study described in the introduction. Genre is used to assist in the representational analysis of the field of study in the specified historical period (1946-1965) with reference to the discourses of law and order within the verisimilitude of crime, and masculinity within the verisimilitude of gender relations. The evidence is provided by textual analysis. The outcomes are: the efficacy of genre criticism as a critical approach that aids the representational analysis of British cinema, making the theory of representation, for instance, less pragmatic, and to contribute to the knowledge about the aesthetic practice of British cinema in the historical period.

Genre is not mainly used in the sense of 'industrial mechanism', as evidenced in the industry's 'inter-textual relay' of publicity, posters, press books and review journalism (Neale, 2000, p.43). The research does not draw upon industrial generic discourses to any extensive degree since it is not part of its rationale to 'fix' the generic identity of films at synchronous moments in history using this kind of evidence. However, such historical material has been consulted in the preparation of the thesis and it is

occasionally used intertextually to support textual readings. Furthermore, material such as press books and contemporary reviews and plot synopses have been used, along with secondary sources of generic classification such as Gifford (1986), as part of the content analysis and quantification methods used to place the crime genre and films that dramatize professional crime in the institutional context of production, and this is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE DRAMATIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL CRIME 1946-1965 AND BRITISH FILM PRODUCTION 1930-1985

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a quantification of three specific aspects of the British crime and professional crime films in their context of production to show the place of the 'genre' and the theme of professional crime within trends of production in the period 1930-1985: (1) the crime film as a generic category in the pattern of production of genres in the British film industry between 1930 and 1985; (2) the establishment of the field of study of professional crime films between 1946 and 1965 and its relationship to the general trend of crime genre production 1946-1985; (3) the identification of the origin of crime and professional crime films in specific British production companies 1946-1965. The trends provide evidence about the industrial production of genres as part of a wider institutional context. The summary of these results provides, firstly, a complementary context of quantification for textual analysis adopted in the present study, and secondly discusses the significance of the results in the institutional context of British cinema 1946-1965.

5.2 The complementarity of quantitative and textual analyses

The present study adopts the complementary use of quantification and textual analysis as promoted in Allen et al. (1997). As outlined in Chapter 3, Allen et al.'s research addresses the popularly held impression that increasing depictions of criminal violence

and lawlessness in the media are responsible for perceived rises in crime and a disrespectful society. Using a content analysis of films released in Britain between 1945 and 1991, their study disproves this commonsense view by reporting that although ‘real life’ crime statistics show considerable increase, crime content had not risen and was just a constant and perennial preoccupation (averaging forty-four percent of all film releases) in a period in which the absolute number of films halved (pp.94-97). The authors’ findings are presented in abbreviated form in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3
TRENDS IN FILM GENRES RELEASED IN BRITAIN 1945-1991

High Crime Genres												
Genre	Crime		Western		Fantasy		Farce		Adventure		Drama	
Date	%	%CC	%	%CC	%	%CC	%	%CC	%	%CC	%	%CC
1945-1967	18	100	10	89	5	34	7	25	10	67	17	30
1969-1991(1)	15	100	3	46	15	39	8	32	9	78	24	33

Low Crime Genres								
Genre	Romance		Sex		War		Total	
Date	%	%CC	%	%CC	%	%CC	%CC	<i>N</i>
1945-1967	10	7	2	7	9	12	43	827
1969-1991	4	4	6	7	4	15	45	683

Notes.
(1) The sample was taken every second year.
% is the percentage of films in the genre. %CC is the percentage of films that contain crime content. *N* is the number of films coded.

Source: Allen et al. (pp.95-96).

This research provides a significant context to the present study and raises methodological issues and domains for further work. In particular they advocate two domains in which the broad context of these trends might be useful to more detailed analyses of single films. They propose that the analysis of pattern in film genres can assist in 'the investigation of trends in audience expectation, interpretations, and effects' (p.91), but this does not form part of the central concern of the present study. However, more pertinent is the advocacy of the 'complementarity between quantitative analyses of trends across films and the more common interpretative analyses of individual films' (p.90). This complementary approach might be described as being 'situationistic' in the sense that textual analysis is expanded beyond just a few films in relation to a particular analytic framework by interpreting texts in the situation of overall historical shifts and patterns of, for instance, generic location of theme or institutional context.

Quantification can be used to provide information about how much representation of social themes there is, their typicality or diversity, for instance, and so provide a context for the consideration of the more qualitative aspects of exemplary texts.

Thus, for example, Allen et al. (1997) show two that the generic "homes" for crime representations between 1945 and 1991 were crime and drama since they were fairly well represented genres of seventeen and twenty percent, respectively, of all films.¹ They also show that the two genres contain constant amounts of crime content (100 and, on average, thirty-one percent, respectively).² This provides one situation in a wider context of the representation of crime across different genres (such as the decline of the

¹ The range for the proportion of crime films is from eleven percent (1969-1973) to twenty-five percent (1945-1949) and for drama from sixteen percent (1963-1967) to thirty percent (1981-1985).

² The range for the proportion of crime content in the drama genre is from twenty-four percent (1945-1949) to thirty-six percent (1987-1991).

Western or the rise of the fantasy film as a site for crime content) for the consideration of specific film texts in which crime is treated constantly and perennially as a dramatic preoccupation. Such situational trends, therefore, would complement the qualitative analysis of particular films in their socio-historical context. The next section provides a quantification analysis for the context of textual analysis within the present study.

5.3 The British crime genre and the dramatization of professional crime in the context of production 1930-1985

5.3.1 Scope and rationale of the enquiry

The scope of the present enquiry is concerned with films 'made in Britain', with those films that qualify economically and legally as one aspect of 'British national cinema', as discussed in Chapter 2. This is because this approach provides a tangible and quantifiable field of study in a national production context that is not tied to more problematic cultural definitions of indigenous forms and questions of national identity. The general rationale for the use of quantification analysis is that it assists in the historical contextualization of single films with reference to the discursivity of the particular theme of professional crime by quantifying the degree and trends of representation and therefore the weight of its significance.

The more specific compass of the investigation is in three parts: (1) a scrutiny of the trends in the production of British film genres during, before and after the specific period of study; (2) the establishment of the precise field of study of films containing significant depictions of professional crime in the dramatic mode and the comparison of the incidence of this content to the overall production of the crime category; (3) the relation of these trends to specific production companies from the different sectors of

the British film production industry in order to establish the origin of crime and professional crime films. The precise significance of the whole quantification analysis will then be summarized and discussed at the end of this chapter.

5.3.2 The production of British genres 1930-1985

5.3.2.1 Sources and methods

The problem of producing taxonomies of fixed genres, given the hybrid nature of film and the critical discursivity that attends their definition, was discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, there is a requirement to qualify the attempt to make generic categorizations for quantitative purposes. However, the method does have the value of giving a general but tentative indication of patterns and trends of historic genre production. Using a classification of films registered as British developed by Gifford (1986), it is possible to produce a quantification of yearly production of different types of films. It is a highly comprehensive, though not complete, reference work.³ Gifford's classifications are very broad. His crime category, for instance, is defined as a 'dramatic plot turning on any aspect of crime including mystery, murder, detection, violence' (1986, p.12) and this includes the costume melodrama *The Wicked Lady* (1945) and excludes the murder film *10 Rillington Place* (1970). These categories have been largely accepted for the purpose of quantification with only a few re-classifications to films regarded as being part of the field of professional crime films in the period of study.⁴ Thus, the crime category has been slightly altered, but this does not unduly skew the statistics nor contravene the

³ During the process of research the following crime film omissions from Gifford (1986) were found in contemporary reviews and added to the statistics: *Stryker of the Yard* (1953), *Companions in Crime* (1954), *Too Young to Love* (1959) and *Dilemma* (1962).

⁴ *The Calendar* (1948) has been re-classified as 'crime' instead of 'sport' and *The Small World of Sammy Lee* (1963) from 'drama' to 'crime'. Other films that could be re-classified but which are out of the period of the present study have been left alone. Examples might include *Poor Cow* (1967) ('drama' to 'crime') or *Juggernaut* (1974) ('adventure' to 'crime').

procedure of using exhaustive and mutually exclusive classification. The period of analysis runs from 1930, the beginning of the studio years for sound film production, to 1985, the final year covered in Gifford, in order to place the period of the present study in the context of wider historical patterns.

5.3.2.2 Results

The trends in the production of British genres between 1930 and 1985 are reported in Tables 1 to 7. The three leading genres between 1946 and 1965 are crime, comedy and drama (Tables 1, 2 and 3). From 1950 onwards, the crime genre is consistently the most common category of production, averaging thirty-five percent between 1946 and 1965. This is a reversal of the historic trend since in the 1930s and during the war comedy is the leading genre (Tables 4 and 5). The other significant change in the postwar period is that drama replaces the musical as the other staple genre from the prewar epoch. These three staples remain in place between 1966 and 1985 (Tables 6 and 7), but there are important changes. Crime is less clearly the leading genre of production and there is more even distribution of the staples. Although the general trend suggests some stability, the pattern is more unstable with greater fluctuations in total production from year to year and sudden increases in production, such as the prominence of horror in 1972 or sex films in 1975.

However, overall it can be seen that there are significant general trends (Table 1). In the 1930s, comedy and crime are established as the leading categories of British film production. Between 1946 and 1965 crime overtakes comedy in quantification terms as the leading British genre and drama replaces the musical as the third major genre. After 1965, however, the incidence of the three staples is more even. Between 1930 and 1985

TABLE 1

LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1930-1985

Years	First		Second		Third		All films
		[%]		[%]		[%]	
1930-1939	Comedy	539 (35)	Crime	357 (23)	Musical	234 (15)	1544
1940-1945	Comedy	84 (30)	War	51 (18)	Crime	44 (16)	280
1946-1955	Crime	329 (36)	Comedy	214 (23)	Drama	109 (12)	911
1956-1965	Crime	392 (34)	Comedy	252 (23)	Drama	124 (11)	1140
1966-1975	Comedy	149 (18)	Crime	148 (18)	Drama	119 (14)	842
1976-1985	Crime	81 (17)	Comedy	69 (14)	Drama	62 (13)	480
1930-1985	Crime	1351 (26)	Comedy	1307 (25)	Drama	585 (11)	5197

TABLE 2
LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1946-1955

Year	All films	Crime	Comedy	Drama
		[%]	[%]	[%]
1946	44	8 (18)	5 (11)	6 (14)
1947	65	23 (35)	7 (11)	15 (23)
1948	99	38 (38)	18 (18)	16 (16)
1949	103	28 (27)	34 (33)	10 (10)(1)
1950	89	30 (34)	17 (19)	15 (17)
1951	86	31 (36)	23 (27)	13 (15)
1952	104	42 (40)	26 (25)	14 (13)
1953	105	47 (45)	22 (21)	6 (6)
1954	120	46 (38)	30 (25)	9 (8)(2)
1955	96	36 (38)	32 (33)	5 (5)
1946-1955	911	329 (36)	214 (23)	109 (12)

Notes.
(1) In 1949 there were more romances (12), than dramas.
(2) In 1954 there were more adventure films (11), than dramas.

TABLE 3
LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1956-1965

Year	All films	Crime	Comedy	Drama
		[%]	[%]	[%]
1956	100	36 (36)	23 (23)	8 (8)
1957	127	50 (39)	24 (19)	12 (9)
1958	119	36 (30)	22 (18)	8 (7)(1)
1959	111	42 (38)	28 (25)	11 (10)
1960	122	40 (33)	32 (26)	20 (16)
1961	124	48 (39)	31 (25)	9 (7)
1962	143	48 (34)	38 (27)	20 (14)
1963	122	42 (34)	26 (21)	19 (16)
1964	86	28 (33)	11 (13)	7 (8)(2)
1965	86	22 (26)	17 (20)	9 (10)
1956-1965	1140	392 (34)	252 (23)	124 (11)

Notes.
(1) In 1958 there were more war (15) and adventure films (9), than dramas.
(2) In 1964 there were more horror films (8), than dramas.

TABLE 4
LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1930-1939

Year	All films	Crime	Comedy	Musical
		[%](1)	[%]	[%]
1930	84	18 (21)	26 (31)	14 (17)
1931	122	39 (32)	38 (31)	9 (7)(2)
1932	141	30 (21)	55 (39)	21 (14)
1933	177	29 (16)	82 (46)	20 (11)
1934	180	41 (23)	57 (32)	34 (19)
1935	181	37 (20)	65 (36)	28 (15)
1936	213	45 (21)	71 (33)	47 (22)
1937	205	48 (23)	58 (28)	36 (16)
1938	145	35 (24)	58 (30)	20 (14)
1939	96	35 (36)	29 (30)	5 (5)(3)
1930-1939	1544	357 (23)	539 (35)	234 (15)

Notes.
 (1) All percentages in every table are rounded up and down.
 (2) In 1931 the musical was overtaken by romance (20) and drama (12).
 (3) In 1939 the musical was overtaken by drama (11).

TABLE 5
LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1940-1945

Year	All films	Crime	Comedy	War
		[%]	[%]	[%]
1940	55	16 (29)	21 (38)	6 (11)
1941	46	6 (13)	18 (39)	6 (13)(1)
1942	47	5 (11)	15 (32)	16 (34)
1943	52	6 (12)	14 (27)	17 (33)
1944	38	4 (11)	10 (26)	2 (1)(2)
1945	42	7 (17)	6 (14)	4 (10)(3)
1940-1945	280	44 (16)	84 (30)	51 (18)

Notes.
 (1) In 1941 there were more drama films (7), than war and crime.
 (2) In 1944 more musicals (7) and dramas (5), than war and crime.
 (3) In 1945 there were more dramas (9), than crime films, and more musicals and romances (4), than war films.

TABLE 6
LEADING BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1966-1975

Year	All films	First	Second(1)	Third
		[%]	[%]	[%]
1966	75	Comedy 22 (29)	Crime 17 (23)	Horror 7 (9)
1967	91	Crime 18 (20)	Comedy 15(17)	Drama 13 (14)
1968	82	Drama 18 (22)	Crime 13 (16)	Comedy 11 (13)
1969	89	Crime 15 (17)	Drama 15 (17)	Comedy 14 (16)
1970	106	Crime 20 (19)	Drama 20 (19)	Horror 12 (11)
1971	55	Comedy 13(24)	Crime 9 (16)	Drama 6 (11)(2)
1972	107	Crime 19 (18)	Horror 17 (16)	Drama 16 (15)
1973	89	Comedy 20(22)	Crime 16 (18)	Horror 9 (10)
1974	71	Horror 17 (24)	Crime 11 (15)	Comedy 10 (14)
1975	77	Drama 13 (17)	Sex 13 (17)	Comedy 12 (16)(3)
1966-1975	842	Comedy 149(18)	Crime 148 (18)	Drama 119 (14)

Notes.
(1) Or first equal.
(2) Third equal with horror films.
(3) Crime was fourth with 10 films.

TABLE 7

BRITISH GENRE PRODUCTION 1976-1985

Genre	[%]	
Crime	81	(17)
Comedy	69	(14)
Drama	62	(13)
Sex	52	(11)
Fantasy	47	(10)
Horror	32	(7)
War	27	(6)
Musical	26	(5)
History	17	(4)
Romance	14	(3)
Adventure	12	(3)
Others	41	(9)
Total	480	

it is clear that crime and comedy are the definitive genres of British film production, consisting of twenty-six and twenty-five percent, respectively, of total film production.

Allen et al. (1997), as established earlier, showed that the crime genre is a constant category of films on release in Britain between 1945 and 1991 averaging seventeen percent (Figure 3). In terms of British film production, in the similar period of 1946 to 1985, the constant proportion of crime films is slightly higher with an average of twenty-three percent (Table 1). However, in the period of the present study, between 1946 and 1965, the figure is double at an average of thirty-five percent (Tables 2 and 3), demonstrating the degree of specialization in home production. This was also the case for comedy since this genre constitutes about a fifth of British film production between1946 and 1985 (Table 1) but only about eight percent of films on release in

Britain between 1945 and 1991 (Figure 3). The strength of British production in comedy, crime and drama between 1946 and 1965 is reflected in the fact these categories have the lowest proportion of American films amongst releases at this time (Figure 4). Between 1969 and 1991, however, whereas non-American drama increased in the British market, crime and comedy became the categories with the highest proportion of American films (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4
THE PROPORTION OF AMERICAN-SOURCED FILMS RELEASED IN BRITAIN
1946-1991 IN RANK ORDER BY GENRE

Years	1946-1967(1)		1969-1991	
		%		%
	Sex	17	Sex	17
	Farce	43	War	34
	CRIME	48	Drama	43
	Drama	55	Western	43
	War	60	Adventure	56
	Romance	63	Romance	57
	Fantasy	64	Fantasy	57
	Adventure	70	Farce	60
	Western	97	CRIME	61
	All films	62	All films	50

Notes.
(1) The sample was taken every second year.

Source: Allen et al. (1997, pp.95-96).

5.3.3 Professional crime films and British crime film production 1946-1985

5.3.3.1 Sources and methods

Allen et al. (1997) show that in the films released in Britain between 1945 and 1991 more crime content (sixty-two percent) is present outside of the crime genre since genres such as the Western and adventure films have a high percentage of crime content (Figure 3). Thus, the authors argue that a complete consideration of the representation of crime would require looking at crime *across* as well as *within* genres (pp.97-98). The present study recognises that a complete understanding of the representation of crime in British film must be based across the whole field of examples. It would be illuminating, for instance, to compare the treatment of crime between the crime and the comedy genre. However, a complete consideration of the representation of crime across all genres in the chosen period of study would entail dealing with a huge field of study and a large range of generic categories. Equally, 'crime content' is too encompassing to be treated without delineation.⁵ Thus, the present study is limited to the crime genre and its dramatization of professional crime. The field of study for the period 1946-1965 was established through a consideration of the content of the films within the crime genre in terms of their depiction of professional criminality established in Chapter 1. This was achieved through the viewing of available films and by consulting plot synopses in contemporary reviews in journals such as *Kinematograph Weekly* and *Sight and Sound*. A similar assessment was made of films for the following period of 1966-1985 in order to compare the historic trends. Finally, a quantification was made of the running times of the professional crime films in the present study in order to establish the proportion

⁵ Allen et al. define 'crime content' in plot synopses as any 'mention of a crime, criminal, or the criminal justice system'

of longer and shorter films and place them within the historical context of first, second and co-feature production between 1946 and 1965.⁶

5.3.3.2 Results

From the field of British crime films between 1946 and 1965, consisting of 721 features as established earlier, it is possible to generate a filmography of 309 films (Appendix I) that are considered to contain significant depictions of professional crime. The resultant set of 'professional crime films' does not constitute a genre. These films belong to a subdivision of Gifford's broad crime category created using a content analysis conducted by viewing films or by referring to plot synopses and reviews in contemporary journals and trade publications such as *Kinematograph Weekly*. As established in Chapter 1, the study uses the term 'professional crime' to refer to criminal organization, crimes against property, 'white collar' crime such as embezzlement, private investigators employed by private individuals or corporations against criminal conspiracies and to rule out espionage, crimes with political motivations and murders by non-professional criminals acting alone. In later chapters, the set of professional crime films generated in this way provides a field of study from which exemplary texts are considered generically and in their social and historical context. In the present chapter, the division is quantified in terms of the proportion of films that dramatize professional criminality to total British crime film production over time (Tables 8, 9 and 10; Figures 5 and 6), and with an address to more specific contexts of production - a comparison of the proportions of professional crime to other crime films produced by different types of British production companies (Table 13).

⁶ The source of running times is Gifford (1986) or contemporary reviews if not in his catalogue.

The yearly breakdown of crime and professional crime films is presented in Table 8. Generally in this period, whenever the total number of crime films increased or decreased, then the number of films containing significant depictions of professional criminality followed the trend (Figure 5). Thus, the incidence of this content relates proportionately to overall crime film production with some consistency. Despite one or two fluctuations, for example a low point in 1950, professional crime films constitute a constant proportion of yearly crime film releases until 1963 of about forty-five percent, after which there was a sudden decline, but the average for the whole period is still forty-three percent (Tables 8 and 9).

Within this broad pattern, however, there were some variations. For instance, although the number of crime films increased a little between 1949 and 1950, professional crime films fell, before recovering sharply again the following year (Figure 5 and Table 9), but this involves fluctuations in the range of only two or three films, so such quirks are not necessarily that significant.

The period between 1963 and 1965, however, is quite important. At this point, as crime film production began to decline dramatically, and the black and white crime film was ending, the incidence of professional crime fell from fifty-one to just nine percent. Furthermore, overall, there was a much higher proportion of professional crime films in the first twenty of the postwar years compared to the next twenty. Between 1966 and 1985 the average proportion of professional crime films had fallen to twenty-three percent (Tables 8 and 10), and although the number of professional crime films did continue to shadow rises and falls in overall crime film production, there were more significant fluctuations given the small numbers of films involved (Table 10 and Figure

6). In the 1970s, for instance, the representation of professional criminality in crime films became more of a cyclical rise and fall, rather than a constant feature of crime film production. It can be concluded, therefore, that the general quantification pattern of depictions of professional crime resulted not just from the general regulation of the production of generic variety, but also from the specific institutional context of the studio system between 1946 and 1965.

TABLE 8

A SUMMARY OF BRITISH CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION 1946-1985

Years	Crime	Professional Crime
		[%]
1946-1965	721	309 (43)
1966-1985	229	53 (23)
1946-1985	950	362 (38)

TABLE 9

BRITISH CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION 1946-1965

Year	Crime	Professional Crime
		[%]
1946	8	3 (38)
1947	23	9 (39)
1948	38	16 (42)
1949	28	12 (43)
1950	30	9 (30)
1951	31	15 (48)
1952	42	18 (43)
1953	47	21 (45)
1954	46	21 (46)
1955	36	19 (53)
1956	36	14 (39)
1957	50	23 (46)
1958	36	14 (39)
1959	42	16 (38)
1960	40	22 (55)
1961	48	22 (46)
1962	49	25 (51)
1963	41	21 (51)
1964	28	7 (25)
1965	22	2 (9)
1946-1965	721	309 (43)

FIGURE 5

A COMPARISON OF THE CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM IN BRITISH FILM PRODUCTION 1946-1965

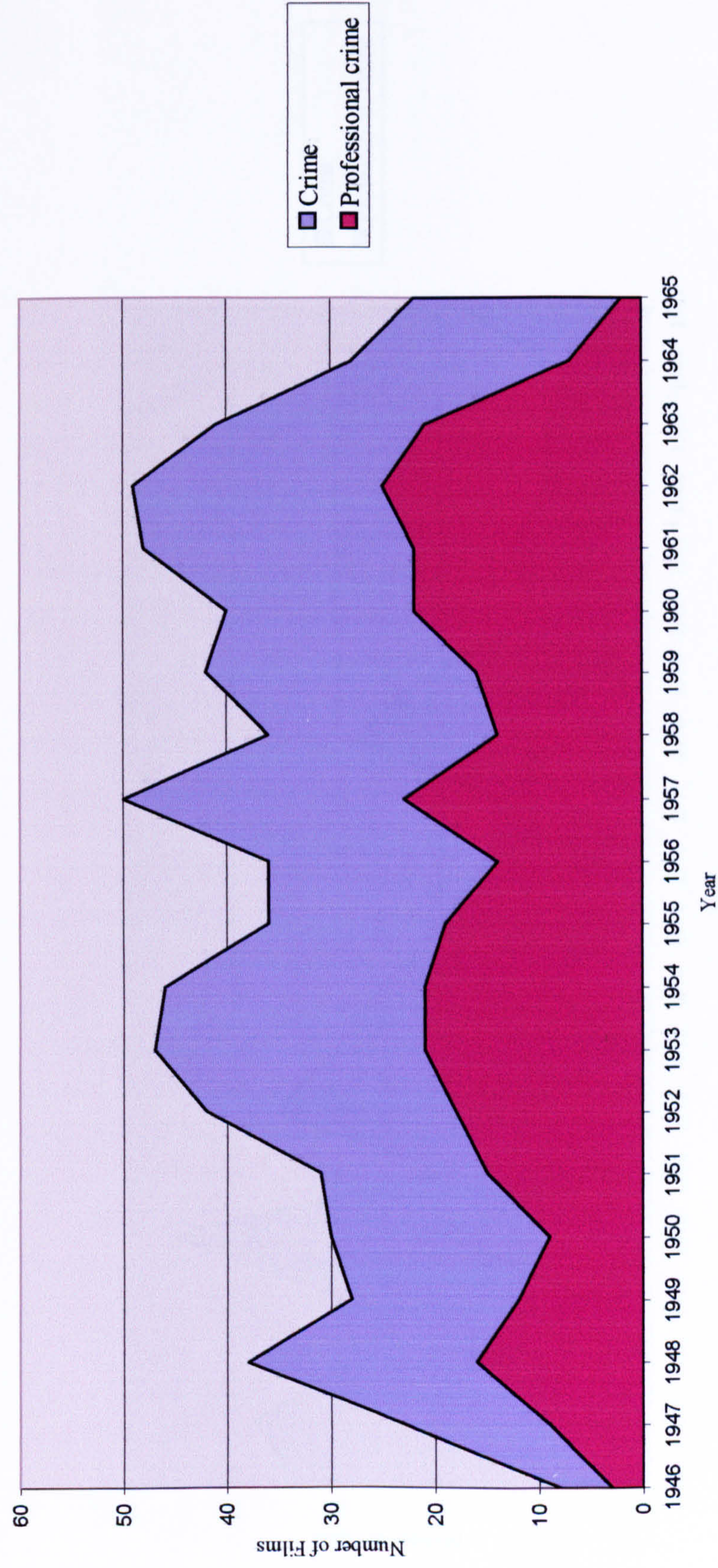


FIGURE 6

A COMPARISON OF THE CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM IN BRITISH FILM PRODUCTION 1966-1985

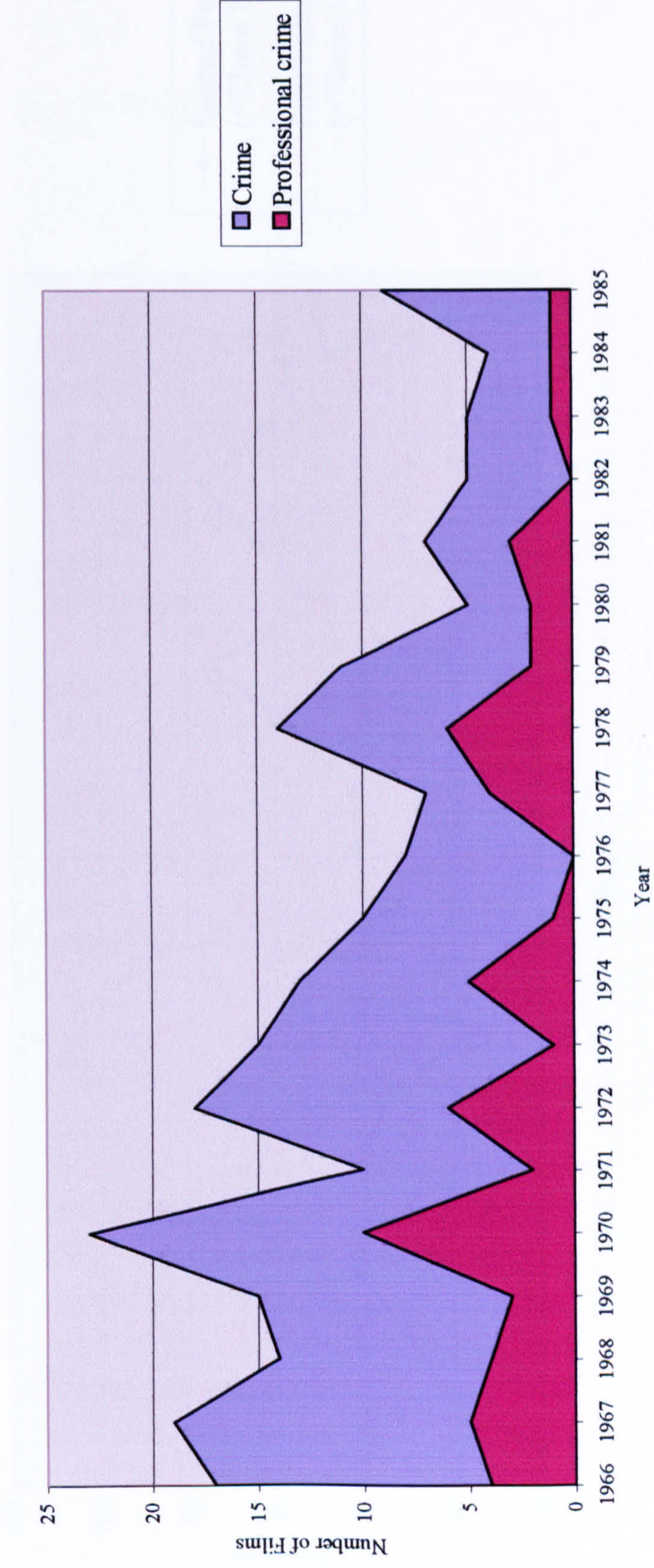


FIGURE 7

A COMPARISON OF RUNNING TIMES AS A PROPORTION OF PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILMS 1946-1965 – FIRST AND SECOND FEATURES

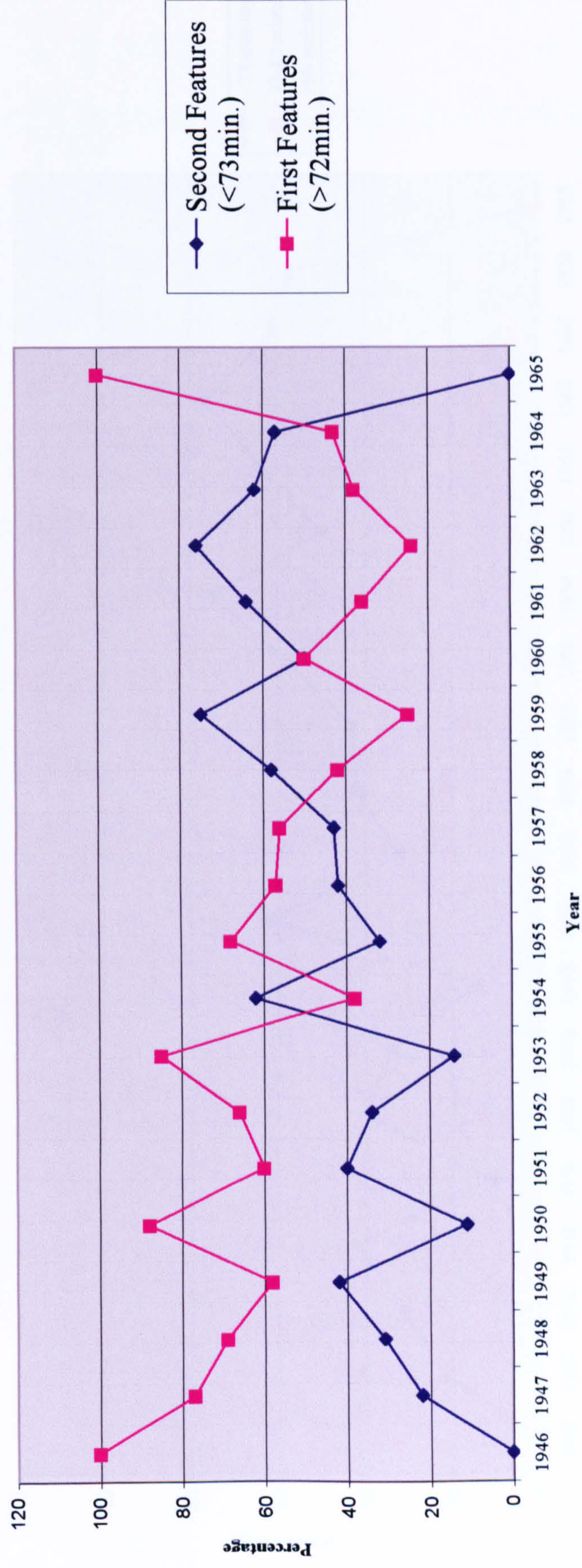


FIGURE 8

A COMPARISON OF RUNNING TIMES AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILMS 1946-1965 – ‘MID-LENGTH FEATURES’

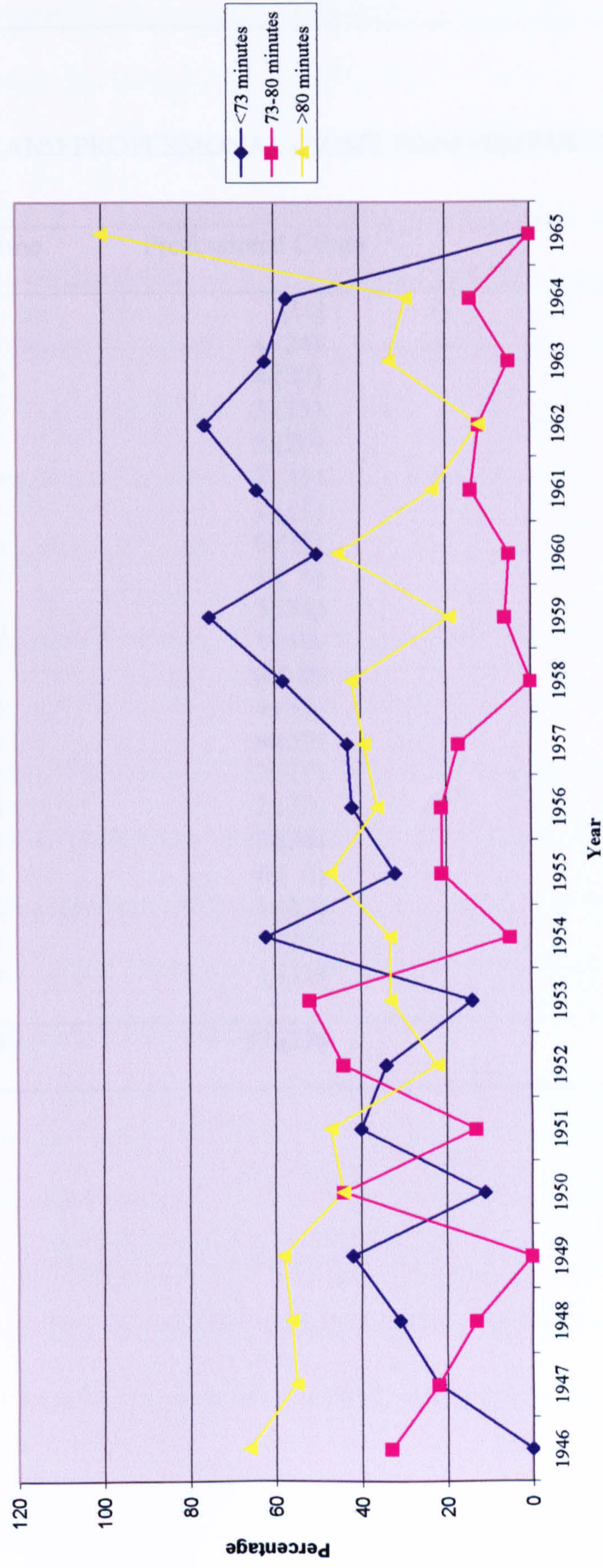


TABLE 10

BRITISH CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION 1966-1985

Year	Crime	Professional Crime
		[%]
1966	17	4 (24)
1967	18	4 (22)
1968	13	3 (23)
1969	15	3 (20)
1970	20	7 (35)
1971	9	1 (11)
1972	19	6 (32)
1973	16	1 (6)
1974	13	5 (38)
1975	10	1 (10)
1976	8	0 (0)
1977	7	4 (57)
1978	14	6 (39)
1979	11	2 (18)
1980	6	2 (33)
1981	8	3 (38)
1982	8	0 (0)
1983	6	1 (17)
1984	4	1 (25)
1985	9	1 (11)
1966-1985	229	53 (23)

Central to the studio system was the production of shorter second or co-features. The ‘generally accepted yardstick’ for determining second feature films was if they were no longer than 6,500 feet or about seventy-two minutes long (Political and Economic Planning, 1958, p.167). This was an unwritten codification until the *Cinematograph Films Act* (1957) made a legal distinction for differential treatment with regard to the Eady Levy.⁷ Forty-seven percent of professional crime films between 1946 and 1965 have running times of less than seventy-three minutes (Table 11), so the B film was in quantification terms an important component of the overall dramatization of professional crime in that period.

The pattern of first and second features production of professional crime films between 1946 and 1965 is presented in Figure 7. It can be seen that there are three distinctive periods. Between 1946 and 1953 the first feature dominated with an average of seventy-eight percent of all professional crime films. However, in the period 1954-1957 there was a more even split between A and B films. Lastly, a new pattern emerged between 1958 and 1964 when first features were in the minority at an average of thirty-seven percent of total professional crime films.

However, while such figures provide a useful overview, they need to be qualified. Despite the formal and previously informal determination of first and second features by running times, in practice the distinction was not always so straightforward. This was because certain films could be used quite flexibly when they were distributed and exhibited. *Strongroom* (1960), for instance, has a running time of eighty minutes, and it

⁷ An Eady Levy multiplier of two and a half times was introduced for second features in order to support B film production.

TABLE 11

RUNNING TIMES OF BRITISH PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION
1946-1965 – FIRST AND SECOND FEATURES

Year	Total	<73 min. Second Features	>72 min. First Features
		[%]	[%]
1946	3	0 (0)	3 (100)
1947	9	2 (22)	7 (77)(1)
1948	16	5 (31)	11 (69)
1949	12	5 (42)	7 (58)
1950	9	1 (11)	8 (88)
1951	15	6 (40)	9 (60)
1952	18	6 (34)	12 (66)
1953	21	3 (14)	18 (85)
1954	21	13 (62)	8 (38)
1955	19	6 (32)	13 (61)
1956	14	6 (42)	8 (57)
1957	23	10 (43)	13 (56)
1958	14	8 (58)	6 (42)
1959	16	12 (75)	4 (25)
1960	22	11 (50)	11 (50)
1961	22	14 (64)	8 (37)
1962	25	19 (76)	6 (24)
1963	21	13 (62)	8 (38)
1964	7	4 (57)	3 (43)
1965	2	0 (0)	2 (100)
1946- 1965	309	144 (47)	165 (53)

Notes

(1) With rounded percentages the total will not always add up to 100 percent.

TABLE 12

RUNNING TIMES OF BRITISH PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION
1946-1965 – ‘MID-LENGTH FEATURES’

Year	Total	<73 min.	73-80 min.	>80 min.
		[%]	[%]	[%]
1946	3	0 (0)	1 (33)	2 (66)(1)
1947	9	2 (22)	2 (22)	5 (55)
1948	16	5 (31)	2 (13)	9 (56)
1949	12	5 (42)	0 (0)	7 (58)
1950	9	1 (11)	4 (44)	4 (44)
1951	15	6 (40)	2 (13)	7 (47)
1952	18	6 (34)	8 (44)	4 (22)
1953	21	3 (14)	11 (52)	7 (33)
1954	21	13 (62)	1 (5)	7 (33)
1955	19	6 (32)	4 (21)	9 (47)
1956	14	6 (42)	3 (21)	5 (36)
1957	23	10 (43)	4 (17)	9 (39)
1958	14	8 (58)	0 (0)	6 (42)
1959	16	12 (75)	1 (6)	3 (19)
1960	22	11 (50)	1 (5)	10 (45)
1961	22	14 (64)	3 (13)	5 (23)
1962	25	19 (76)	3 (12)	3 (12)
1963	21	13 (62)	1 (5)	7 (33)
1964	7	4 (57)	1 (14)	2 (29)
1965	2	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (100)
1946- 1965	309	144 (47)	52 (17)	113 (36)

Notes

(1) With rounded percentages the total will not always add up to 100 percent.

was originally distributed as a supporting co-feature until positive reviews allowed Columbia to switch it to a first feature for a two week run in the West End (McFarlane, 1997, p.530).

Films that might be described as ‘mid-length features’ with running times of between seventy-three and eighty minutes could potentially be used quite flexibly within the three hour programme. These films met the required first feature length, but they were not so long that they could not be used as supporting features. It is interesting to examine the proportion of these ‘mid-length films’ in relation to overall professional crime film production (Table 12 and Figure 8) because they show where the first feature was in relative decline to the B film. Between 1946 and 1953, films with running times between seventy-three and eighty minutes long accounted for twenty-eight percent of all professional crime films during that period. This figure declined to sixteen percent in the following period 1954-1957 and fell again to eight percent during 1958-1964.

Thus, three significant, but overlapping periods can be identified. The late 1940s was characterised by a high proportion of A films about professional crime, a pattern that continued through to 1953. During the mid-fifties, a transitional period, the first feature declined and the B film became more prominent. Finally, between 1958 and 1964, B films about professional crime were proportionately the highest category. The number of mid-length films fell away so that most professional crime films in the late fifties and early sixties were the very longest or shortest features, a sharpening of the differentiation between first and second features after the 1957 *Cinematograph Films Act*.

5.3.4 The British crime film, professional crime films and production companies in Britain 1946-1965

5.3.4.1 Sources and methods

The purpose of this section is to identify the trends in the production of crime and professional crime films with specific reference to British production companies between 1946 and 1965. The sample constitutes a majority of the total crime and professional crime films made by the British majors and the leading producers of crime films amongst the British subsidiaries of American companies and British independents.⁸ The main source of information is Gifford (1986) cross-referenced with Goble (1999) and additional information taken from books on individual studios such as Warren (1988), Falk (1987) and Hearn and Barnes (1997). There is a problem in assessing the production programmes of the British majors since it is difficult to unravel the complex arrangements of production and distribution finance in the studio system. For example, Falk lists 356 'British feature-length films with which the late Lord Rank and/or one of his companies and his successors have been financially involved' (1987, p. 179) for the period 1946 to 1965. However, if one reports separately the 'satellite' productions such as those by Ealing or Gainsborough, and only the directly funded productions by companies such as Two Cities, Independent Producers Limited (IPL), Pinewood, Aquila, Production Facilities, British Film Makers (BFM), Group and Rank are included, then the total is reduced to 178 Rank productions between 1946 and 1965. Films attributed to the majors, then, are those that are seen to be most directly part of their production programmes rather than as the product of more indirect production and distribution deals with, for instance, one-off production companies.

⁸ The sample represents fifty-five percent of total film production, sixty-one percent of all crime films and sixty-two percent of all professional crime films.

5.3.4.2 Results

A summary of British film production by the British majors, selected American companies and particular British independents is provided in Table 13. Apart from allowing comparisons from one company to another, it also permits a number of more general observations to be made. During the period 1946-1965, the proportion of crime films made directly by the British majors out of their total production is eighteen percent. Similarly, the crime films of the featured British subsidiaries of American companies constitute only twenty-four percent of their total production. This is very close to the proportion of crime films released in Britain between 1945 and 1967 (Figure 3), but way below that of the thirty-five percent of all British productions that belong to the crime genre between 1946 and 1965 (Table 7). In contrast, sixty-three percent of the films made by the British independents featured in the survey are crime films. Most crime films at this time, then, were made by the British independent sector. Of the 721 crime films produced between 1945 and 1965, the majors and the Americans are each only directly responsible for about nine percent of the total (sixty-five and sixty seven films respectively), whereas the featured independents account for about forty-two percent of all crime films (306 out of 701 films). Many British independents were specialists in this field of production. Merton Park productions alone, for example, provide over ten percent of crime films made between 1946 and 1965 and half of Hammer's 106 films belong to the crime genre.

Similar disproportions between the different sectors of production are achieved for the production of professional crime films. The majors and the Americans in the survey are each responsible for less than ten percent of all professional crime films, but the

selected independents produced forty-seven percent of the 309 professional crime films made during this period. However, there is less disparity in the amount of professional crime films made as a proportion of total crime genre production. The majors and Americans are the same at thirty-seven percent, whilst the independents are higher with an average of forty-seven percent of professional crime films out of the total crime film production for each sector. Thus, most images of professional criminality are found in the B films or co-features made by the British independents, but the contribution of the British majors and the British subsidiaries of Hollywood companies was not too disproportionate since the average proportion of professional crime films to total crime film production between 1946 and 1965 is forty-three percent (Table 8). The British majors and the British subsidiaries of American companies made fewer crime films, but they did not especially under-represent portrayals of professional crime.

TABLE 13

A SUMMARY OF BRITISH CRIME FILM AND PROFESSIONAL CRIME FILM PRODUCTION BY INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES

Company	Years	Total Production	Crime Films		Professional Crime Films	
				[%](1)		[%](2)
Majors						
ABPC	1946-1965	90 ⁹	16	(18)	4	(25)
Rank(1)	1946-1965	178	30	(17)	8	(27)
Gainsborough(2)	1947-1950	37	8	(22)	5	(63)
Ealing	1946-1959	56	11	(20)	7	(64)
Total majors	1946-1965	361	65	(18)	24	(37)
Americans						
20th Century Fox	1946-1965	59	12	(20)	3	(25)
MGM	1948-1965	37	10	(27)	4	(40)
United Artists(3)	1948-1965	59	16	(27)	2	(12)
Columbia(4)	1946-1965	68	17	(25)	7	(41)
Warwick	1953-1960	22	4	(18)	3	(75)
Paramount	1948-65	11	1	(9)	0	(0)
Walt Disney	1950-1965	17	1	(6)	1	(100)
Republic	1953-1955	9	6	(67)	5	(83)
Total of selected Americans	1946-1965	282	67	(24)	25	(37)

⁹ This is a tentative assessment. The main source for this figure is the list of films made at Elstree in Warren, 1988, pp.176-180. It also includes films made elsewhere, especially at Welwyn studios. The figure includes ABPC, Associated British - Pathé, Associated British Pathé, and Associated British productions, as well as co-productions and more independent productions made with ABPC support. It is difficult to give a precise figure without establishing, in the context of the company's support of so much 'independent production', what is meant by an 'ABPC production'. Thus, this figure represents an approximate but fairly comprehensive total.

Company	Years	Total Production	Crime Films	Professional Crime Films	
				[%](1)	[%](2)
Independents					
Hammer	1948-1965	106	53	(50)	14 (26)
Nettlefold	1948-1953	16	12	(75)	5 (42)
Butcher's	1946-1964	22	19	(86)	12 (63)
Merton Park	1946-1965	88	72	(81)	35 (49)
Danzigers	1956-1962	57	33	(58)	13 (39)
Independent Artists	1958-1963	32	14	(44)	7 (50)
Insignia	1953-1958	14	8	(57)	6 (75)
Baker & Berman(5)	1948-1961	47	30	(64)	16 (53)
ACT	1951-1962	21	13	(62)	4 (31)
Group 3	1952-1956	22	2	(9)	1 (50)
E J Fancey	1953-1956	8	6	(75)	4 (75)
Major	1953-1957	7	7	(100)	4 (57)
Guido Coen(6)	1954-1962	12	11	(92)	6 (55)
Eternal	1960-1965	9	6	(67)	3 (50)
Blakeley's Films	1961-1963	5	5	(100)	4 (80)
Luckwell(7)	1955-1962	19	15	(79)	10 (67)
Total of selected independents	1946-1965	485	306	(63)	144 (47)
Others	1946-1965	923	283	(31)	117 (41)
Total	1946-1965	2051	721	(35)	309 (43)

Notes

- (1) The percentage of crime films of the total film production for each company.
- (2) The percentage of professional crime films of the total number of crime films made by each company..
- (3) Includes Two Cities, Independent Producers Ltd., Production Facilities and Aquila.
- (4) Includes Triton because of the connection with the Boxes.
- (5) Excludes independents covered elsewhere such as Danzigers.
- (6) Excludes independents covered elsewhere such as Danzigers.
- (7) Includes Tempean, Mid-Century and Kenilworth productions by Baker and Berman.
- (8) Includes Coenda, Theatrecraft and Fortress productions.
- (9) Includes productions by Bill & Michael Luckwell, Jaywell, Luckwell, Luckwin and Norcon involving the 'Luckwell family'.

5.4 Summary and discussion of results

5.4.1 Summary of results

The high proportion of British crime films (thirty-five percent of total film production) made between 1946 and 1965 makes it a very distinctive period. At this time, crime overtook comedy as the most prolific genre. This was in the context of a wider period between 1930 and 1985 in which over a half of all British films (apart from during the war years) were either crime or comedy films. The level of professional crime content is in a constant and proportionate relationship with overall crime production. Again, the period 1946-1965 is significant because the proportion of professional crime content is on average much higher (forty-three compared to twenty-three percent) than in the following two decades. This higher proportion coincides with the studio system of first and second feature production in which three distinctive periods can be identified: a high proportion of A films during the late forties, the dominance of shorter A films, co-features and B films in the early fifties, and from the later fifties onwards, a revival of the A film and the rise to prominence of the 'one-hour' B film (1959-1963). The British independent sector was the main supplier of B crime films between 1946 and 1965 and there were many specialist and some large-scale production companies (Hammer, Merton Park, Danzigers). The British majors and British subsidiaries of Hollywood companies made fewer crime films, but they were not unduly disproportionate in making dramatic films about professional crime.

5.4.2 Significance of the results for the present study

In respect of genre studies and representational analysis, the results establish the crime genre as a major category of British film production between 1946 and 1965, peaking at over forty percent of all films 1952-1953 (Table 2), and therefore, also as an important object of study. Similarly, the theme of professional crime is identified as a significant constituent of the genre's content. The quantification analysis reveals a field of study that is representative of a substantial body of British film production and the product of patterns in the system of first and second feature production. The analysis provides contextual qualities such as the trends identified in the three distinctive periods that contribute to the periodization adopted for textual analysis in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. In addition, where there are significant patterns in the textual properties of first and second features at specific historical moments, these will be addressed in the process of the consideration of genre and representational discourses of crime and masculinity. However, the scope of the present research is not designed to include the problematic of textual determinism with regard to the specifics of production companies or to the qualities of first and second features. These are amongst a number of other possible enquiries that lie beyond the concerns of the present investigation, but which will be discussed in relation to future work in Chapter 9.

Above all, the quantification analysis is presented in order to demonstrate the significant contribution of the independent sector and the B film to the crime genre within the studio system of production between 1946 and 1965. This contribution has largely been overlooked in the academy and the present study addresses this neglect with the view that British cinema is defined in a major part by all the films 'made in

Britain' and therefore that minor B films are as valuable objects of study as the products of the majors or the most popular films. Obviously, questions of cultural value and production context are important, and the significance of, for instance, the preoccupation of the A film with professional crime in the late forties, or its relative lack of concern in the early fifties is important, but all professional crime films within the period of study have their distinctive generic characteristics and discursive preoccupations that are worthy of study.

5.4.3 Significance of the results for the institutional context of British cinema 1946-1965

The full implications of the quantification analysis, which shows that the crime and comedy genres are major categories of generic production in the British film industry between 1930 and 1985, are mostly beyond the scope of the present study. However, this section acknowledges that other enquiries about this institutional context are important, and provides a brief discussion of issues raised and topics that could be addressed by further research.

The size of the field of British crime films in the postwar period, and therefore the importance of the genre within the institution of British cinema, demands comment and further investigation. However, the incidence and qualities of film texts are products of complex factors within the industrial context of film-making and the studio system. For example, the main components of the British film industry in the postwar years were; the duopoly power of the 'majors' (Rank and Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC)) in terms of distribution and exhibition; state intervention through exhibitors quotas (thirty percent from 1950 to 1983); the Eady Levy (1950-1985); the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) (1949 to 1985); the continued investment of

American companies in distribution and production; the ever-present success of Hollywood productions at the box office; and the survival of independent production between the 'luxury' of protectionism and the 'restraint' of combine power. But this is just one aspect of the intricate context in which British film production takes place and generic trends are determined and have their effects.

The crime genre was, though, part of an historical tradition of genre film-making. For instance, Ryall suggests that the vigour of the strands of crime and comedy that was established in the 1930s is rooted in traditional British popular culture such as music hall comedy and the crime melodrama of 'pulp' literature and down-market Sunday newspapers, as well as in the way that the quota system fostered low budget films aimed at these popular taste cultures (1986, pp.72-83).¹⁰ This popular taste was also influential in the rise of the crime film to statistical predominance in the 1950s since, at one level, it can again be understood as a response to the market for low budget films. Robert Baker, the producer-director of the company Tempean, which was responsible for over 30 B films in the 1950s, has testified to the importance of market demand and the pleasures of the thriller:

A thriller is always acceptable. The public appetite was in favour of thrillers rather than comedies, but you could make a comedy or a thriller - anything in between was very dubious!...With a murder there's something to interest you, whether it's a question of whodunit, or someone's life in jeopardy, or someone on the run from the law or the villains....It was demand basically. Thrillers were easier to sell and therefore easier to set up.(McFarlane, 1997, p.46).

¹⁰ Ryall compares the British context to that of Hollywood in the 1930s where it was possible to build on a strong tradition of sharply defined and varied genres. In contrast, the British film industry had a stunted development in the 1920s which led to the domination of the three broadly defined genres: initially crime, and with the coming of sound, the comedy and the musical (Ryall, 1986, pp.72-73). See Table 3.

Another prolific crime film-maker, Francis Searle, at Hammer, thought that comedy was more difficult on a low-budget and that the market was more determining than personal taste (McFarlane, 1997, p.526).

The postwar domestic market was a difficult one for production because producers could seldom recoup their costs unless production costs were rigorously controlled (Porter, 2000, p.470).¹¹ However, this was an everyday constraint for the vast majority of film-makers in the B film sector. The B film performed an 'industrial function, catering for 'popular' taste, for modest reward (McFarlane, 1995, p.56). Second features were made in three or four weeks by personnel receiving flat fees, with budgets of between £12,000 (for second features) and £25,000 (at the co-feature end), for distributors with arrangements with circuits.¹² B film-makers had to deliver second and co-features to distributors on (low) budget and in (popular) genre.

Although the British crime film was an industrial staple in the period 1946-1965, it achieved neither high cultural status¹³, nor sustained popular approval. It was only prominent in the listings of the 'most popular films' at the end of the 1940s during the momentum of the 'spiv cycle'.¹⁴ They were not generally the biggest box office successes so that there is sometimes a lack of evidence of how they fit into what has

¹¹ Porter (2000) uses financial documents to show that film production could be profitable with genres such as the 'bourgeois drama' and comedy that appealed to the tastes and sensibilities of the occasional cinemagoers, although distribution and exhibition were less financially risky.

¹² See for example the transcripts of interviews with Robert Baker, Francis Searle and Vernon Sewell in McFarlane (1997).

¹³ Even creative personnel working in the field felt tainted by its lowly cultural value. Lewis Gilbert felt that the films he made on 'Poverty Row' were 'bad'. Guido Coen, who moved from being executive assistant to Filippo Del Giudice at Two Cities to be an independent producer of mainly B crime films, described the change as the difference between 'champagne' and 'beer'. Brian Clemens, however, described his time as a screenwriter at Danzigers as a 'tremendous experience' (Interviews with the author).

¹⁴ Janet Thumim has compiled a list of 'The Most Popular Films at the British Box Office 1945-1960' from 'mentions' received in a number of annual awards categories. The presence of *They Made Me a Fugitive*, in 1947, *It Always Rains on Sunday*, in 1948, and *The Blue Lamp* in 1950, indicates a unique 'popularity' high-point for some films in the genre in this period (Thumim, 1991, pp.258-259).

been called 'the landscape of popular taste' (Harper and Porter, 1999, p.67), and even where there is evidence, caution must be exercised in assessing the significance of a film's performance at the box office.¹⁵ For instance, *The Yellow Balloon* (1952) was typical of ABPC's crime films that performed either poorly or more often averagely on the ABC circuit (Porter, 2000), but its 'X' certificate compromised its box office potential (Chibnall, 2000, pp.50-51).¹⁶

Since so much of crime film production in the period 1946-1965 was within the B film sector it is difficult to analyse the genre in relation to box office appeal or statistics when shown alongside other films on the same bill. Furthermore, the B film sector of the British film industry is a very under researched area. Brian McFarlane has calculated that between 1946 and 1963 there were 922 B films released in Britain (1996, p.51), but there is a need to be cautious about this figure because it is calculated by reference to the total outputs of companies who made B films and not through the consideration of other evidence (such as running times) on a film by film basis. Roy Stafford suggests that there were far more short films being made in Britain than were likely to be shown in British cinemas because of the availability of Hollywood features. He concludes, therefore, that 'British "B" feature production was designed for overseas markets (and television) as much as for home distribution' (2001, p.99). Again, one would need further research to investigate this claim and to consider the wider context of the crime

¹⁵ It has been suggested that it is erroneous to concentrate on box office success alone for issues of representation and identity in the 1950s since the most popular films were only two or three times more successful than the rest, and the 'ingrained habit of weekly attendance meant that nearly all films got a significant audience' (Stafford, 2001, p.107).

¹⁶ *The Yellow Balloon* along with *Man on the Run* (1949) were amongst the least successful ABPC films on the APC circuit (total gross billings of less than £100,000), whilst *Brighton Rock*, *Noose* and *Cairo Road* (1950) were 'average' successes (billings of between £100,000 and £200,000) (Porter, 2000).

film as one of the most important genres within the production system for the three-hour programme of exhibition.

Research has established through statistical and survey evidence the views held by audiences about the most popular films, such as 'clear gender differences in genre preference' (Harper and Porter, 1999, p.74). In the 1950s, regular women cinema-goers preferred melodramas and 'upbeat female romances' (p.74). In the late 1930s, mass-observation questionnaires in Bolton revealed that women gave a higher priority to history and love stories, whilst many men favoured crime, but working-class men gave it even greater priority (Richards and Sheridan, 1987, pp.32-41). Similarly, Andrew Spicer (1999) has used audience surveys¹⁷ and studies of crime fiction¹⁸, in his study of 'tough guy' masculinity in British crime cinema in the 1950s, to show that a significant development in the postwar cinema audience was the increase in affluent, young working-class males who were receptive to American culture such as the 'urban crime thriller' (Spicer, 1999, pp.83-84).¹⁹

Occasional cinema-goers in the post-war period were fond of domestic comedies that lightly ridiculed social conventions, whereas regular attenders preferred Hollywood dramas and melodramas (Harper and Porter, 1999, p.78). It would have been the 'regulars' who had most contact with B films, and, therefore, the ones who would be interested in them. This is supported by the fact that 'the most sustained debate there is on British B films' is contained within the letters pages of *Picturegoer* magazine

¹⁷ *The Cinema Audience: A National Survey*, London: Screen Advertising Association, 1961 and an unpublished Cinema Audience Survey for Rank, December 1955, used as a source in Gans, Herbert (1959) *American Films and Television Programs on British Screens: A Study of the Functions of American Popular Culture Abroad*, Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Institute for Urban Studies.

¹⁸ Worpole, K (1983) *Dockers and Detectives*, London: Verso.

¹⁹ This contrasts with the 1930s where it is suggested that the 'quota quickie' genres of crime and comedy developed as an indigenous resistance to American culture that appealed to lower-middle-class and older working-class audiences (Napper, 1997, pp.41-46).

(McFarlane, 1996, pp.59-60), whose readers would have been part of this more regular audience. McFarlane's summary of extracts from these letters of the early 1950s reveals how the audience was concerned enough about the second feature to express opinions ranging from outright damnation, through qualified praise and constructive criticism, to enthusiastic satisfaction.

Throughout the 1950s, however, 'comedy was the most popular genre with all cinema-goers, both male and female' (Harper and Porter, 1999, p.76). This was a continuation from the 1930s, when most of the top stars had comic and/or musical qualities (Sedgwick, 1997) and few crime films other than Hitchcock's thrillers were the most successful at the box office.²⁰ This raises, therefore, the question of why the comedy genre does not continue as quantitatively the leading genre in the post-war period. Perhaps comedy was more difficult to achieve on a low budget because the range of British comedy was much broader and varied than it was during the music-hall era. In terms of markets, it could be that the British comedy film was too parochial and, unlike the crime film, it could not easily imitate American genres or import American stars to aid overseas distribution. Perhaps the crime film was more in the taste of the regular audiences than the growing occasional cinema-goers who created box office hits or that it was used to create a balanced three-hour programme in terms of gender preferences.

Beyond the concern with popular taste and the relationship between audiences and texts in the context of production, distribution and exhibition, however, there is, in fact, a field of study of enormous potential and significance to British cinema history, but this belongs to the potential of future enquiries. The purpose of the remaining parts of

²⁰ John Sedgwick has compiled a list of the 'Top 50 British films 1932-37' (Sedgwick, 1997).

the present study is to provide an analysis of the generic properties and discourses of crime and masculinity in exemplary texts in their socio-historic context and this forms the basis of the next three chapters in which the greater period of 1946-1965 is divided into shorter periods complementing the periodization established in this chapter – the late forties, the first part of the fifties, and later fifties and early sixties.

CHAPTER 6

THE DRAMATIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL CRIME IN BRITISH FILM 1946-1949

6.1 Introduction

This chapter, and the following two chapters, presents an analysis of the way that professional crime figures in British crime films in the period 1946-1965. The timeframe is broken down into three shorter periods: (1) 1946-1949; (2) 1950-1956; and (3) 1957-1965. This demarcation is somewhat artificial given the continuum of time and film production, but the periods are formulated to relate to the trends of production established by quantification analysis (Chapter 5) and to the patterns of representational discourses that are typical of each stage. Textual analysis in each chapter begins with a section on the institutional, critical and social context for each period. Analysis in each period is presented with specific reference to genre and discourses of crime and masculinity. The specific enquiry in relation to discourses of crime will be to consider how films in these periods, and overall, represent criminality and law and order issues. Similarly, in terms of the discourses of masculinity, analysis will be concerned with the kind of masculine identities that were offered in the professional crime films of these periods.

These chapters, then, will use genre criticism as a tool of analysis to address the politics of representation raised by the depiction of professional crime in a dramatic context. The emphasis will be on genre as aesthetic practice through the textual analysis of specific films. This will involve the application of the concept of the verisimilitudes

of genre and cultural reality, the plausible worlds through which 'society talks to itself' (Gledhill, 2000). Reference will be made both to the organizing modalities such as melodrama and realism, and to 'fixed' genres such as the suspense thriller or the gangster film, the discursive categories that audiences and critics call upon to order their experience of cinema and participate in film culture. However, genre criticism will not only be used as a tool of analysis, but also to analyse the aesthetic practice of British cinema at specific historical moments and as part of a longer tradition of genre film-making.

6.2 Institutional, critical and social context

The late forties was a notable period for the dramatic rise in production to meet quota requirements and the demand for more films created by the Hollywood boycott.¹

Production of British films rose from forty-four films in 1946 to 103 in 1949. Thirty-one percent of all films at this time are crime films, and of these ninety-seven crime features, forty have significant depictions of professional crime. They are also mainly first or co-features since thirty-one of the forty have running times of over sixty-nine minutes. At this time, Hammer started to make B crime films as a particular strategy of sustained production, but above all this was a very significant period for the depiction of professional crime in first features.²

There is a bias towards adaptation from literature (and the theatre) in the source material of these A films.³ The low life novels of Arthur la Bern, for Ealing's *It Always's Rains on Sunday* (1947) and Triton's *Good Time Girl* (1948), and Norman Collins, for IP-Individual's *London Belongs to Me* (1948), provided the cultural verisimilitude of 'ordinary people' and their involvement in crime. The hard-boiled 'pulp' fiction of James Hadley Chase and Gerald Butler (the source for Alliance's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1948) and *Third Time Lucky* (1949), respectively) was popular fiction combining sex and romance within an underworld milieu that could easily be adapted into film melodrama, but Graham Greene's modernist updating of crime fiction (in ABPC's *Brighton Rock* (1947) and London-BLPA's *The Third Man*

¹ In response to Britain's imposition of a tax on American films in August 1947, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) retaliated with a boycott of the British market until the dispute was resolved in March 1948 (Street, 1997, pp.14-15).

² The Hammer professional crime films in this period are *Dick Barton Special Agent* (1948), *River Patrol* (1948), *The Dark Road* (1948) and *The Adventures of PC 49* (1949).

³ For example, *Noose* (1948) and *Boys in Brown* (1949) were both adapted from plays by Richard Llewellyn and Reginald Beckwith, respectively.

[1949]) was less obvious source material for popular film. However, the books tended to be more morally ambiguous or challenging for traditional morality than the toned down, but still controversial, films.

The films' controversial nature is revealed in adverse contemporary critical reaction and censorship problems (Murphy, 1989). After the war, prohibitions on the depictions of professional crime were easing since the BBFC conceded the right to represent the reality of crime that historically had been denied. Consequently, films that would not have appeared in the 1930s were now allowed. By the late 1940s it had become possible to make films based on real life crime that previously were not permissible, such as *The Case of Charles Peace* (1949). The BBFC's treatment of films that were based on real life criminal cases, such as Hammer's *The Dark Road* (1948) and *Good Time Girl* (1948), exemplifies a significant change in attitudes.⁴

There was, then, a sudden upsurge in the late 1940s of a greater cultural verisimilitude in the representation of British professional crime, or imitation of American idioms, that is partly explained by the liberalization of censorship. James Robertson outlines how films such as *Appointment With Crime* (1946), *Dancing With Crime* (1947) and *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947) were passed slightly cut or uncut within the script-vetting system (Robertson, 1999, pp.17-19) and how the release of *Brighton Rock*, with its razor slashing and organized crime, was a 'crucial landmark' (Robertson, 1989, p.94).

⁴ Both of these films delayed a release, but not prohibited altogether. Robert Murphy has suggested that *Good Time Girl* was delayed because of its melodramatic style and its controversial substance (such as criticism of the Approved School system) (1989:159). *The Dark Road* 'was banned by the censors for some time for supposedly glorifying violence and showing that crime does pay' (*Dark Terrors* 9, p.28).

However, the recognition of the validity of 'British' gangster films by the censors proved to be an insecure concession after the furore that followed the release of *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. Objections to the film mainly focused on its imitation of American gangster films and its portrayal of sexuality (McFarlane, 1999). But, as it will be established later in this section, the film's release coincided with attempts by the Labour Government to liberalize the penal system during a postwar crime 'boom' and concerns about the rise of juvenile delinquency. Thus, the BBFC's 'laxity' was eventually exposed and challenged by the moral panic that greeted the release of *No Orchids*, and it is suggested that this 'slowed down the pace of post-war liberal change over the next few years' (Robertson, 1989, p.97).

Thus, the significant institutional context for the depiction of professional crime in British film in the late forties is one in which there is a certain consonance between audiences and film-makers, with the tacit support of the censors, that the verisimilitude of contemporary crime and popular genres with crime content is an interesting and valuable topic. As discussed in Chapter 5, the A crime films of the late forties, and exceptionally for the period 1946-1965 as a whole, were often amongst the 'most popular' films. The crime film at this time also attracted a number of directors and creative teams that subsequently have become leading British auteurs in critical discourse, although they were mostly in a period of change and adjustment.⁵ However, this agreement between audiences and film-makers that the exposure of crime problems is a worthwhile and relevant expression of social experience is one that was not

⁵ Cavalcanti was making his first film post-Ealing. The Boulting Brothers were establishing themselves as independents after wartime productions. *The Third Man* was Reed's second film post-Rank for London-BLPA and Robert Hamer was moving from editor to director. Launder and Gilliat, however, were going through a period of continuity. *London Belongs to Me* was their fifth film together since *Millions Like Us* (1943).

universally held, but was in fact an idea subject to contestation during a period of sensitivity to rising crime against a background of social reform and postwar reconstruction.

Property crimes, such as robbery and theft, were widely featured at this time, but as many as eighteen films presented images of black marketeering or other forms of racketeering, and they have attracted considerable critical attention because of the way that the films represent this cultural verisimilitude. Robert Murphy (1986; 1992), in particular, has attributed films to a 'spiv' cycle. The coherence of this cycle is primarily in terms of the reference to 'spivs' or 'spivvery'.⁶ Murphy places this cycle in the context of a 'riff-raff' tradition beginning in the thirties and which is highlighted for its authentic representation of a low life underworld or criminal milieu. This same 'riff-raff realism' was later praised by Wollen (1998) for its fusion of realist discourses and melodramatic 'excess' producing an indigenous *noir* aesthetic deserving a 'key place in the pantheon of British cinema (p.22). More recently, Pulleine (1999) refers to spiv movies as a 'sub-genre' that is influenced by Neo-realism and *film noir*. The orthodox critical discourse, therefore, about the spiv film, reflects a taste culture that values the realist mode and the *noir* genre. This orthodoxy raises interesting issues with regard to the aesthetic qualities of these films and in terms of 'how' and 'what they mean, particularly as a generically coherent cycle. This chapter will address these issues as well as examining other professional crime films that have been more critically neglected.

⁶ The spiv was a contact man between the public and the world of professional crime at a time when it was possible to exploit all kinds of shortages. The popular image of the spiv was as an ambivalent figure, a flashily dressed opportunist.

In terms of the social context for textual analysis in the late forties, the war years had left a 'complex and untidy heritage' involving prewar social divisiveness and debates about the transformations and choices of wartime control (Morgan, 1990, p.26). The Labour government's agenda of nationalization and reform was challenging for an apprehensive society faced by austerity and economic hardship. A good example of the challenge of reform was the government's introduction in 1948 of a controversial Criminal Justice Bill. This liberal measure abolished corporal punishment and opened a debate on capital punishment. The advocacy of the appropriate 'treatment' of offenders was an attempt to modernize justice that confronted the traditional retributive morality of punishment.

Unfortunately for the government and the reformers generally, this legislation took place during a postwar 'crime wave' in which reported crime figures rose dramatically (Chibnall, 1977, p.51). Weapons were in wide circulation, there were concerns about the depleted police force, and murder and delinquency were the particular preoccupations of the press in the first decade after the war (p.52). In the underworld, protection, gambling and prostitution continued to be fruitful sources of income for the gangs who were attempting to assert their positions in peacetime, but these were not the most public crimes. Instead it was black market racketeering (the exploitation of austerity and scarcity by professional criminals, and particularly by amateurs and part-timers) that had a high degree of visibility and wide participation in the infraction of postwar regulations, and which provided the cultural verisimilitude that was represented in many British crime films in the late forties.

Postwar instabilities and reforms were also significant for gender relations. The war had disrupted family life and marriage and postwar legislation brought the possibility of 'easier' divorces. The war also accelerated the change of the position of women in society. Women were prominent in the war effort at home and in the services and were allowed to experience many new roles that otherwise would have not been available. Women were also being centrally addressed in the process of postwar reconstruction, not just because of their traditional importance within the home, but as part of the workforce and as a key target for advertising in the emerging mass market for fashion, beauty and consumer products. For many men, there was the need to adjust to peace and the return to civilian life following demobilization. There was, then, a 'volatile domestic/sexual situation' in the late forties (Harper, 2000, p71).⁷ As will be established in this chapter, professional crime films present images of 'troublesome' women and 'troubled' men, and particularly discourses about the maladjustment of ex-servicemen, that provide further evidence of this volatility.

6.3 Genre

Textual analysis in this chapter is limited by the availability of appropriate examples for study, but the sample used still represents over a third of professional crime films in this period, but mainly A films. Two categories of films are described. 'Spiv films' has the coherence of being a recognisable cycle in the late forties (Murphy, 1989), whereas 'non-spiv films' is pragmatically defined by their exclusion from the cycle. Generic analysis is not concerned with taxonomy or boundary disputes, but with examining hybridity as a basis of generic organization and aesthetic properties of popular film.

⁷ Harper suggests that there were a variety of gender representations at this time, but that the presentation of female stereotypes was cautious and conservative.

Stylistically, for instance, *noir* expressionism is a characteristic of crime films at this time, but this section is not concerned with whether or not particular films are *noir*. However, *noir*, as established in Chapter 4, does have descriptive value in generic analysis and particular resonance in relation to discourses of crime and masculinity in this period.

‘Spiv films’ feature black marketeering or have spiv characters and as ‘underworld films’, they have significant depictions of professional crime. However, they also use murder as a dramatic convention, particularly within the thriller genre and the melodramatic mode. The thriller and melodrama, used in different ways, for instance in relation to realism, are most often the defining characteristics of the films’ generic organization. Often, also, the films’ *noir* style is related to their aesthetic treatment of violence. The ‘non-spiv films’ consulted in the study, of course, lack the portrayal of the contemporary black market and vary considerably in their depiction of professional crime. They are less likely to be centrally concerned with murder, although murder could function in similar ways, and once again the thriller and melodrama are key generic elements that allow comparisons of aesthetic practice to be drawn.

Good claims can be made for the group identity of the spiv films because of their references to the contemporary cultural verisimilitude of black marketeering, although this varies quite considerably. In *Noose*, *Night Beat*, *The Third Man* and *They Made Me a Fugitive*, spiv villains are memorably prominent, even if Harry Lime (Orson Welles) is more than a stereotypical spiv ‘transposed from London to post-war Vienna’ (Wollen, 1998, p.21). In other examples, spiv characters are less central. In *Good Time Girl* they are part of the realism of the underworld that adopts the delinquent. *Brighton Rock* also

has spiv-like characters, but its criminal verisimilitude is protection racketeering. Dave (Bill Rowbotham) in *Dancing with Crime* is a chirpy chancer, but he is a thief in a gang headed by a 'master crook' in a chain of command influenced by American gangster melodrama (Pulleine, 1999, p.28). And black marketeers are just one part of an extensive criminal milieu that is evoked in the recreation of the personal dramas of East End life in *It Always Rains on Sunday*.

Similarly, they can all be described as underworld films. *The Third Man* is the most unusual for being set outside of the London underworld, and its racket of deadly, diluted drugs is a fatally serious racket. However, its depiction of the business of organized crime is more comparable; meat, nylons and drugs in *Fugitive*; smuggled 'booze' in *Night Beat*; tea, petrol, counterfeit money and the structuring absence of prostitution in *Noose*; and the gang of property criminals in *Dancing with Crime*. But, in *Good Time Girl*, with its razor gangsters, spivs and street robbers, and *Sunday*, with its milieu of petty crime, doss houses, fences, spivs and 'smash-and-grab' robbers, there is a more extensive depiction of professional crime. Thus, these films are unified in the way that they feature the recent or contemporary cultural verisimilitude of professional and organized crime.

'Non-spiv' films obviously lack the cultural verisimilitude of the black market and vary considerably as underworld films. *Boys in Brown* (1949) depicts its juvenile offenders as poorly organized robbers, but it is mainly set in a Borstal institution. *My Brother's Keeper* (1948) and *London Belongs to Me* have significant references to professional crime but no real sense of an underworld milieu. *The Spider and the Fly* (1949) does have a centrally positioned underworld, but in a historical and foreign

setting, as does *No Orchids*, also in a foreign setting. Underworld activities are prominent in *The Shop at Sly Corner* (1947) and *Third Time Lucky*, but still somewhat of a backdrop to other dramas and conflicts.

One common characteristic that is particularly illuminating about the fictional worlds of the spiv films is the way that murder is used as a dramatic convention, most commonly organized through the thriller mode of suspenseful action or in melodramatic terms acting like a lens bringing moral clarity out of ambiguous fuzziness. Near the beginning of *The Third Man*, for instance, a murdered police informant who has been involved in the drugs racket is buried at the spiv's supposed funeral. The seeker-hero attempts to investigate the mysterious circumstances of his friend's apparent death, and the conspirators commit a further murder to avoid exposure, as in the convention of detective fiction. Similarly, *Fugitive* is a thriller in which Clem (Trevor Howard) suffers and attempts to solve problems as an active hero-victim, because of the death of a policeman whose murder is the result of the spiv-villain's conspiracy. Clem's plight is worsened when Narcy (Griffith Jones) has the key witness killed, a member of the gang which is imploding according to the convention of the fictional world of the gangster film.

Typically, then, the spiv films are notable for the use of varying patterns of melodramatic conflict and murder narratives employing the conventional action and suspense of the thriller. *Noose* begins in a lightly comic mode with its introduction of Bar Gorman (Nigel Patrick), with his fast-talking patter and flamboyant confidence, as he opens up for 'business', but the unseen discovery of a body in the Thames interrupts the cultural verisimilitude of the black market for the fictional world of a thriller

recycled from an unmade script of the thirties, *Murder in Soho* (Murphy, 1986, p.300). The gang boss's hired killer is the gothically grotesque 'the barber' (Hay Petrie), whose weapon of choice, a woman's stocking, is more iconic of the sex murderer than the razor gangster. Inevitably, further killings follow as exposure in the press and vigilantism orchestrated by a pair of outraged reporters, Jumbo Hoyle (Derek Farr) and Linda Medbury (Carole Landis) threatens and leads eventually to the melodramatic, 'feel-good' destruction of the evil within the gang. Like *Noose*, *Night Beat* opens deceptively, this time as a romantic melodrama with interlocking love triangles set against a background of postwar readjustment from military to police service, before changing, though belatedly, to murder melodrama. The murder of the spiv, Felix (Maxwell Read) is part of the film's thriller endgame in which victim-hero Andy (Ronald Howard) is falsely suspected of the crime, before his sister (Anne Crawford) and his wartime 'chum', Don (Hector Ross) perform an uplifting rescue.

Both *Brighton Rock* and *Dancing with Crime*, however, share the initial disruptive murder structure of *Noose*. Pinkie (Richard Attenborough) murders in the context of inter-gang rivalry, but then his actions in one sense are more logical within the fictional world of the detective thriller than the gangster film, as he conspires to murder witnesses who can incriminate him under the threat of exposure by the investigating heroine, Ida (Hermione Baddeley). Near the beginning of *Dancing with Crime*, Dave is murdered by Paul (Barry K Barnes), his rival within the gang, thus setting in motion its collapse through opposition from the hero-victim Ted (Richard Attenborough). Ted is Dave's wartime comrade who is tough enough to survive the gang's attempt to execute him, to uncover the truth behind his friend's death, and to carry off a last minute rescue of his fiancée (Sheila Sim).

However, in *Good Time Girl* and *Sunday*, murder functions rather differently, although both films are not without melodramatic incidents or action and suspense. When Whitey (Jimmy Hanley) kills the mean fence Neesley (John Salew) in *Sunday* in an aggressive street robbery, it is an incidental moment of brutality stemming from a personal grudge by an inadequate petty thief during the main drama of the final pursuit of the escaped convict Tommy Swann (John McCallum). The murder adds further differentiation between the range of ordinary criminals presented rather than contributing to Manichean conflicts. Likewise, even though it is a moral tale, *Good Time Girl* has no great drama of good versus evil. The murder of Red Farrell (Denis Price) is the film's most melodramatic moment, signalled by the loud orchestral music and the screams of Gwen (Jean Kent) as she realises the motorist about to be killed by her fugitive companions is the only man who has treated her with any decency. But its function is to provide the dramatic low point of Gwen's fall.

However, murder in films outside of the spiv cycle is less common, although it could function in similar ways. In *My Brother's Keeper*, for instance, the murder of Hodges (Arthur Hambling), who almost discovers the fugitives, escalates the seriousness of their escape, exacerbates the pathos of their plight and creates suspense of wronged innocence. *London Belongs to Me* also has a fusion of melodrama and suspense as accidental killing leads to a murder conviction and a last minute reprieve. The murder in *The Shop at Sly Corner* is pure melodrama, the protection of innocence and a moment of great pity. *Boys in Brown*, *The Spider and the Fly* and *Third Time Lucky*, though, are not murder films. The killings in *No Orchids* are part of the gangsters' routine violence demanded by the cultural and generic verisimilitude of American organized crime and

hard-boiled fiction, although the first killing during the kidnapping of Blandish constitutes a typically conventional crossing of a moral boundary to a 'murder rap'.

The spiv cycle can be examined using the relationships in the films between the cultural verisimilitude of postwar crime and their generic fictional worlds. For instance, consider the different aesthetic practices of *Good Time Girl* and *The Third Man*. *Good Time Girl* is a film that reflects a desire to engage with social reality to the point of criticism, but this is a problematic strategy in the context of the moral censure of censorship restrictions and sensitivity about the postwar crime wave. In contrast, *The Third Man* starts with a premise about a fictional plot in which a dead man is not really dead. This is then placed in the contemporary social reality of 'Vienna after the war', but more intently in terms of providing a setting and a mood.

The cultural verisimilitude of *The Third Man*, however, is a convincing internationalism of story and characterisation achieved through location filming and the casting of international stars with British character actors. This realism is then fused with a *noir* visual style of canted framing and low-key lighting that harmonises the fictional world of the thriller with the verisimilitude of a (post)war-torn European city. Holly Martins (Joseph Cotten) is a *noir* hero lost in the maze-like plot structures of the thriller and Lime is a 'hunted man'. It also has the doubling of unstable identities characteristic of thriller fiction. Lime is dead-alive, good-bad, for example, and Anna is an actress literally and metaphorically (a Czech with Austrian identity papers). As melodrama, both Holly and Anna suffer as victims, but the film lacks traditional notions of heroism (Landy, 1991, p.183) and polarised morality. Instead, morality is itself a major discourse. Durgnat describes it as a 'philosophical thriller' about betrayal and

treachery; the human condition at the heart of crime (1997, pp.101-102), and this is certainly played out in the love triangle formed by Holly-Anna-Harry. What is also striking about the film's discursiveness is a modernist self-reflexivity about popular forms such as the thriller and the moral order of melodrama. Holly is a writer of pulp westerns, variously referred to as a 'master of suspense', 'scribbler' and 'hack writer'. In the final sequence Holly leans on a cart like a cowboy hero as Anna approaches him through an avenue of trees, but continues past. In Greene's world of guilt and moral pessimism the 'truthfulness' of the fictional world of 'cowboys and indians' is that goodness and the 'feel-good' of happy endings is elusive.

The Third Man draws on the sensational fictional world of the thriller without accepting that melodrama can adequately represent social reality. *Good Time Girl*, however, shows a cautious approach to melodramatic sensation and its agenda of reform refuses simple moral contrasts.⁸ The film's narrative presents a chain of criminalization via the juvenile court and Approved School into the underworld of urban crime, but its central concern is young offenders, or more accurately 'irregulated female sexuality' (Chadder, 1999, p.70) and 'troubled and rebellious young females' (Landy, 1991, p.452), as will be discussed later.

As a social problem film, the expectation would be that it would offer solutions, but there is conflict in the drive to offer a social critique using a melodramatic story of a life lost to crime. Partly, this is because of censorship problems that led to a framing flashback narrative that created a contradictory, cautionary tale in which the supposedly moral narrator is actually culpable in the 'fall' of the young offender (Murphy, 1992,

⁸ It was adapted from a melodramatic novel based on a real crime, the 'Cleft Chin' murder of 1944 (Murphy, 1992, p.91).

p.91). One would expect the magistrate's story of Gwen's 'road to ruin' to draw upon the crystal clarity of the melodramatic mode, but there is no clear battle of good and evil nor emotional return to lost innocence. The moral of the tale appears to be that it is better to stay in an abusive family than run away and be caught by encroaching criminality and to suffer inappropriate punishment.

It is revealing that Jean Kent has expressed her disappointment about the change of Gwen's character from the book that transformed her from 'bad' to 'wide-eyed little pest' (McFarlane, 1997, pp.340-341). As Gwen changes from aggrieved daughter to mean gum-chewing delinquent, from inebriate 'moll' to naïve accomplice, one is hardly moved to pity innocent suffering, nor enjoy the revelation and defeat of true villainy. One is merely left with the moral pessimism of 'how things are', as the magistrate (Flora Robson) stares into space.

These spiv films show a desire to represent a cultural verisimilitude of professional crime that challenged censorship codes, but within quite traditional fictional conventions such as the thriller and melodrama, although sometimes updated with *noir* expressionism. *Brighton Rock*, for instance, is a landmark film in its depiction of the gangster milieu of protection racketeering, but otherwise quite conventional. The melodramatic mode overlaps with Greene's religious symbolism, such as in the hell-like killing of Spicer (Wylie Watson), and there is more moral polarity than in *The Third Man*. Pinkie is plainly bad and Rose (Carol Marsh) is a threatened victim-heroine whose innocence is preserved from the 'truth of the world', the nastiness that remains

inaccessible on Pinkie's recording. But the loyal Dallow (William Hartnell) recognises his leader's true evil and joins the forces of expulsion.⁹

This kind of relationship between the verisimilitudes of genre and culture is quite typical. *Noose* immediately locates its story in contemporary London by a panning camera angled high over the city and a cut to a close up of the word 'Soho' on a church notice board, but its underworld setting becomes the locus of a melodramatic struggle visualised in an expressionist style that one might designate as *noir*. The reflection shots in various reflective surfaces, swaying camera, low-key lighting and canted framing, whilst suggesting the chaos world of the *noir* thriller, also relate to the criminal disturbance of the 'black market terror' that has turned society over and roused the forces of reaction.

Night Beat, *Dancing with Crime* and *Fugitive* share the same cultural verisimilitude of the maladjustment of ex-servicemen figured in their participation in the postwar crime wave. This problematic is organized melodramatically, but *Fugitive* refuses the conventional happy ending of action melodrama. The doubling of characters allows moral contrasts to be drawn. Andy and Don in *Night Beat* are demobbed commandos, hand-to-hand combatants reduced to a 'softer' life in the police. Don, because he is more stable and responsible, settles down to a life of low pay and unsocial hours, whilst Andy drifts towards crime, easier money and expensive girlfriends. But Andy's true goodness is dramatically revealed when a fight with Don enables him to save his friend from drowning, and in return Don helps to rescue Andy from the underworld. In *Dancing with Crime*, Ted and Dave are veterans of Tobruk, one is 'straight', the other

⁹ This differs from the novel, which is more morally ambiguous.

‘gone crooked’. Ted recovers his heroism and lost wartime agency by standing up to the criminals who have killed his comrade.

Fugitive, however, is like a traditional thirties thriller, but with a darker tone (Murphy, 1992, 153). At its conclusion, the villain refuses to confess to the police so that the victim-hero’s innocence remains hidden from them, which contrasts very starkly, for example, with the dying confession in Hitchcock’s *Young and Innocent* (1938). Thus, the audience is denied a ‘feel-good’ revelation, but this is consistent with its *noir* discursiveness and pessimistic melodrama. Its antagonist, Narcy is a monstrous, egoistic spiv-villain who causes acute suffering to those around him and especially its victim-(anti-)hero. Unlike in *Dancing with Crime* and *Night Beat*, there is no little basis in love, self-restraint or hard work that can be returned to once evil has been overcome. The solution to Clem’s malaise, a return to his wartime role, is not resolvable. *Fugitive* is much more concerned with psychological subjectivity expressed through a poetic stylisation than the outward appearance of heroic action, and a poetic stylisation. For example, after Clem’s escape from prison, a sound montage of off-screen police radio operators conveys the search. At other times, visual storytelling is foregrounded, such as the use of superimposition when Sally (Sally Gray) has a vision of Clem behind wire netting whilst performing on stage.

The boundaries between the representation of social reality and the fictional world of genre are well illustrated by *It Always Rains on Sunday*. A contemporaneous book on the making of the film reports that it was a product that responded to the ‘belief that film can provide first-class entertainment while preserving veracity’ (Collier, 1947, p.43). The key tension within this aesthetic was to preserve the authenticity of its social

realism, the novel's 'recognisable people in real surroundings' (p.18), by not adding too much melodrama or man-on-the-run thrills. It is both an 'Ordinary People' film carried over from wartime conceptions of community and a "low life" crime drama (Durgnat, 1997, p.91). Thus, it has the multiple characterisation of an East End community, principally two families, the Sandigates and the Hyams. This discourse is dominated by the domestic melodrama of courtship, adultery and family life. But, according to Collier, the process of adaptation from Arthur la Bern's novel showed a welcome 'injection of wholesomeness' that made the 'low life' more respectable (1947, p.8). The romantic couple (Tommy Swann and Rose Sandigate) were made more sympathetic. Rose, for instance, was made 'younger and less coarse'.

One might see this 'injection of wholesomeness' as undercutting the social realism of the representation of working-class life and crime and it certainly heightens the pathos of the melodrama. Tommy and Rose are both victim-heroes, prisoners literally and metaphorically. Rose is trapped in her domestic circumstances, Tommy is an escaped convict, a professional criminal rather than a wronged innocent. His physical suffering is displayed by the marks of the 'cat' on his back, caused by the corporal punishment that the Labour government wanted to abolish. Hers seems to be a marriage of (in)convenience. The return to lost innocence is the possibility of romantic love. Rose's ring is a symbolic object of their interrupted engagement, but Tommy fails to recognise its significance. His love is tested and fails. They cannot return to the idyll prior to Tommy's arrest that snatches away Rose's happiness at the last moment. When he returns to her life she recognises that it is 'ten years too late'. The blocking of desire is a condition of both the mode of social realism and melodrama, rain on a Sunday, private pleasures 'pissed' on.

Sunday is also a melodrama of action, a crime film. There is a police investigation of a warehouse robbery and a manhunt. A major change from the novel was the addition of the chase finale in the marshalling yards to provide a thrilling climax as Tommy is rounded up like a stray dog. Earlier too, there are other moments of suspense, especially those scenes in the Sandigate house where Rose works hard to prevent her family from discovering Tommy's presence. However, the film is primarily about a group of individuals in a community at a specific time, where characters, such as the spiv Lou Hyams, with his sexual interest in Doris Sandigate, move between the two generic worlds of domestic and crime melodrama in the cultural verisimilitude of an East End community.¹⁰

A further element of the cultural verisimilitude that these spiv films have to approach is the aesthetic representation of violence. This is not a problem for *Sunday* because violence is not really part of its conception of 'authentic' East End life. It is also absent from the intellectualism of *The Third Man*. In other examples, however, sadistic gang violence, typically carried out amongst the offenders and their associates rather than towards the public, is more significant. The pattern of the aesthetic treatment of these physical assaults is by the suggestion of off-screen framings or cutaways, and by expressionist stylisation. Both strategies point to a desire to include this material, but with a self-consciousness about depicting it in a period of moral censure.

There is a moment in *Night Beat*, for instance, when Felix is about to direct his anger at Nixon (Sidney James), a police informant, and the victim is framed through the space created by Felix's hand-on-hip stance. Otherwise the film is neither as violent nor

¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, this is the basis of a point of contention with Brunsdon (1999), who suggests that in *Sunday* there is only the 'generic space' of Hollywood *noir* and the indigenous literal space of location. The expressionism in the film could be seen as 'English' melodrama rather than American *noir*.

expressionistic as the other spiv films. For example, intimidation and murder are part of the realism of protection racketeering in *Brighton Rock*, and the killing of Fred Hale (Alan Wheatley) on the ghost train is treated with the suggestion of montaged sounds and quick cuts. But there are similar stylised set pieces in most of these spiv films, such as Narcy's assault on Sally in *Fugitive*, Sugiani's fatal 'knuckledusting' of Maffy (Brenda Hogan) in *Noose*, or the razor attack on Jimmy Rosso (Peter Glenville) in *Good Time Girl*.

Amongst the non-spiv films, however, fewer films have to deal with violence as a major constituent of its aesthetic practice. In *No Orchids*, for instance, the beatings and shootings are treated quite naturalistically, apart from the accompaniment of loud music, in an otherwise stylised milieu of tough gangster masculinity. This is a reversal of the tendency in the spiv films to have stylised acts of villainy in the fictionalization of contemporary crime.

Among the non-spiv films, the generic fictional worlds of popular film are, like the spiv films, predominantly the thriller and melodrama. Like the spiv cycle also, there are quite sharp contrasts of aesthetic practice, particularly between those films that employ the mode of realism and those that create their own fictional worlds. A good example of this contrasting practice, for example, is between *Boys in Brown* and *The Spider and the Fly*. *Boys in Brown* shares *Good Time Girl*'s dramatization of the control of young offending and the effect of contributing to the process of reform through social criticism. Rather than using the misfortune of a particular individual to tell a moral tale, it takes a group of juvenile offenders confined in the same institution and dramatizes an anxiety about their difference.

Marcia Landy places *Boys in Brown* in the category of the social problem film and identifies the problem as disruptive lower-class young people (1991, pp.445-446). It dramatizes the struggle and resistance of the reformees whilst offering insight into the perspectives of the reformers. As melodrama, it identifies the offenders as collective victims of unfortunate social conditions, especially poor parenting. However, the film looks for moral differentiation within the group. In particular, there are those who are regarded as being capable of successful rehabilitation, such as Jackie (Richard Attenborough) and Bill (Jimmy Hanley), and those who are not, such as Welshman, Alfie (Dirk Bogarde) and Scot, Casey (Andrew Crawford). The implication is that celtic identities are more fixed and the film has problems in establishing moral certainty about the project of reform.

The film is less concerned with moralising the problem, though, than pondering its origins in society. There is little pathos and action, although the importance of parent bonding is emphasised. Bill insists on returning to his adoptive mother even though she has been recognised as a bad parent. Jackie's relationship with his mother, a widow he wants to support, is a special bond. He is victimized not just by the lack of a father figure, but Alfie's rigged drawing of lots, the most villainous act of the film, temporarily blocks his path to redemption and the love of his girlfriend Kitty (Barbara Murray).¹¹

The Spider and the Fly does recreate its historical and foreign setting with a care for authenticity, but this is the basis for a fictional exploration of masculine action and emotion using characters on either side of the law. Similarly, if the aesthetic effect of

¹¹ The redemptive quality of being the recipient of love is a common theme in the crime melodrama at this time and in the melodrama in general.

melodrama is to reveal villainy and innocence and to make it felt, then *The Spider and the Fly*, like *The Third Man*, is not very melodramatic. The film also has the similar *noirish* intellectualism in a distanced setting that characterises *The Third Man*, but critical comment has focused on its emotional qualities. It is a film that becomes easier to understand in reference to genre, even if this involves establishing what it *is not* as much as what it *is*.¹² The film has an aesthetic strategy that displays a modernising lack of popular generic verisimilitude in favour of art cinema's symbolic gesticulation. This is particularly noticeable, for instance, in the strikingly naturalistic, dew laden spider's web that shines as the background image of the opening titles.

The film is set in France between 1913 and 1916, but it is not really a costume film. It has a love triangle romance plot, but it does not have the generic verisimilitude of light romantic comedy of the high-society gentleman thief genre. As a thriller, it is 'cops and robbers', or more precisely master crook and detective, and a relationship between them that constitutes an 'unconventional exploration of criminality' (Landy, 1991, p.273). However, there is literary heritage for the fictional world constructed in the film. There is an important strand in crime fiction 'which looks for corruption in officialdom and bureaucracy and often suggests a close alliance between police and gangsters' (Symons, 1985, p.30).¹³

¹² Landy sees it as a tragic melodrama of male conflicts and ascribes its 'emotional atrophy' to the 'hypocrisy and banality of conventional values' (1991, pp272-274). She refers to Barr's view that it is diagnostic of emotional atrophy and not a victim of it (1980, p.121). Durnat places it in the context of the 'gentleman crook' film that is in eclipse and the director's moral melancholy and 'wistful saddened cynicism' (1997, p.96).

¹³ This tradition has its origins in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), but the film's setting invokes French crime fiction such as Maurice le Blanc's *Arsène Lupin* (created in 1907), in which the eponymous rogue can be both an offender and an agent of control, or the criminal turned policeman, Eugène Vidocq, an ambiguous hero whose memoirs were published in the nineteenth century.

The film opens with a conspiracy in which the elusive thief Philippe de Ledocq (Guy Rolfe) sets up the first of his many alibis with the help of a mysterious woman, Madelaine Saincaize (Nadia Gray).¹⁴ This action contrasts markedly with the next scene in which the response that it is 'just a robbery' reveals the laid back approach of the chief of police, Fernand Maubert (Eric Portman). A series of robberies provide a number of spider-fly encounters, until entrapment occurs. But action is largely kept off-screen and little pathos is generated towards victim-heroes because of a lack of conventional moral polarities of character (Landy, 1991, p. 273). The final part of the film also rejects the opportunity to take advantage of any uplifting feeling of moral clarity. The thief is recruited for a counter-espionage mission during the war, but it is more about pragmatism for all concerned rather than a rallying patriotism. Ledocq gets to see Madelaine and the state gets its secret papers through a morally ambivalent mission of self-interest and mutual dislike, a moral atmosphere not dissimilar to that in *The Third Man*.

Third Time Lucky, *The Shop at Sly Corner* and *No Orchids*, however, are more traditionally melodramatic. *Third Time Lucky* is a combination of *noir* thriller and romantic melodrama, and a rare film at this time in terms of its depiction of underworld gambling. Gerald Butler adapted it from one of his own novels, and his style of popular romantic *noir* fiction was also being sourced by Hollywood at this time.¹⁵ It begins enigmatically with an unseen man lying wounded on a hospital trolley, and the police interview with Joan (Glynis Johns) that triggers her flashback. The hospital is darkly lit and low-angled long shots prevent recognition of the patient. The policeman's question

¹⁴ The thief's name in *The Spider and the Fly* is Ledocq, which recalls Vidocq.

¹⁵ *Third Time Lucky* was based on *They Cracked Her Glass Slipper*. Both *Kiss the Blood Off My Hands* (1948) and *Mad With Much Heart*, released as *On Dangerous Ground* (1952), were Hollywood adaptations of Butler's novels.

to Joan of 'Why did you shoot?' creates further mystery and suspense that will be addressed by recalling the recent past. At the start of the flashback, Joan's taxi travelling along a damp street at night is invaded by Lucky (Dermot Walsh), a man-on-the-run from assailants at a greyhound stadium.

However, this is also a love story with a central heroine typical of women's fiction. It is a romantic melodrama with both action and pathos in which Joan and Lucky have to suffer and solve problems through action. Lucky is the victim of a criminal conspiracy instigated by his love rival, the gang leader Flash (Charles Goldner). Joan falls in love with Lucky immediately, and becomes his devoted mascot. Lucky is a compulsive and superstitious professional gambler, and this prevents Joan from achieving personal happiness. His pursuit of 'easy money' keeps their relationship as a business arrangement. Her love is unreciprocated and tested until Lucky's redemption. She rescues him from the villain and from his addiction, allowing him to confess his love for her and so replace the gambling with something greater, a romantic love that is unconditioned by any financial exchange or sexual threat.

Whereas *Third Time Lucky* is fashionable *noir*, *The Shop at Sly Corner* is more traditional fiction sourced from an enduring middlebrow stage melodrama.¹⁶ As a thriller, the film has mystery and suspense about what will happen next rather than 'whodunnit'. It opens at night with a mysterious figure lurking on a rainy cobbled street, but this is more suspense thriller than not a *noir* environment. The connection between this person and the people enjoying a music recital inside is revealed as a conspiracy

¹⁶ The author of the successful West End play upon which the film was based is Edward Percy (Smith), a Conservative MP at the time of the film's production. The play is in contemporary production, especially by amateur groups, or in festivals. Edward Percy had been a playwright since the 1920s, and an earlier adaptation of his work was *Trunk Crime* (1939).

between the watchful thief, Corder Morris (Manning Whiley) and his fence, Descius Heiss (Oscar Homolka), the owner of the antiques shop at Sly Corner. Archie Fellowes (Kenneth Griffith), the 'shop boy', discovers their secret, and how his blackmail scheme will be resolved is the film's main narrative trajectory.

At the centre of the story, however, is a sentimental melodrama of guilt revealed and innocence protected in the relationship between Heiss and his daughter Margaret (Muriel Pavlow). He has used his criminal proceeds to secure her future as a concert violinist, but Heiss is a victim-hero who has escaped from Devil's Island, where he suffered a wrongful imprisonment for murder.¹⁷ Fellowes' desire to marry Margaret is a sexualised threat to block the old man's return to innocence symbolised in Heiss' painting of the town where he lived as a boy before his criminalization. Heiss is forced to break his moral code to murder in defence of his daughter in a moment of great pity. His eyes fill with tears as he strangles Fellowes, whilst his daughter plays on the radio in a sacred concert.

In contrast, *No Orchids* comes from the more lowbrow imitation of American hard-boiled fiction and the best selling novel during the war, although in adaptation it was given a transfusion of romantic melodrama. McFarlane identifies its generic affiliations as being the gangster thriller and the sex melodrama (1999, p.42). The death of the gangster, Slim Grisson (Jack La Rue), at the log cabin hideaway is unmistakably gangster melodrama. His reciprocated love for Miss Blandish (Linden Travers) is revealed, but it is an impossible love that can only be consummated in death. His demise is not the wilful trajectory of the 'classic' gangster, but an act of moral

¹⁷ The criminal parent who supports their unknowing child is a trope that runs throughout the whole period of study.

redemption as he commits suicide by drawing the fire of the police. A brief return to lost innocence in Miss Blandish's dream of a new beginning in an idyllic escape to somewhere exotic such as Mexico or Cuba is extinguished. Thus, the ending is sad, but it does not have the moral pessimism of the novel. In the book Miss Blandish commits suicide because she is 'utterly soiled' (Stableford, 1991, p.51) and Slim is a psychopathic monster. It cannot find innocence in an 'irredeemably corrupt world' (p.51). In the film, however, Miss Blandish commits suicide because she has lost the only *man* she has ever known.

The central gangster character of Slim Grisson is absent from the first third of the film and neither the book nor the film has the conventional discourses about heroic individualism and capitalism associated with the Hollywood gangster melodrama. The moral pessimism of the novel is to present 'a world devoid of heroes' (Stableford, 1991, p.51), and the film tries to recreate the settings, sounds and atmosphere of an idiomatically American gangster underworld based on a tyranny of violence and casual sex. It presents hierarchical competition between different gangs exploiting rackets such as slot machines or predatory project crimes such as robbery and kidnapping. This criminal world implodes with the self-destruction of the gangs, but this is more to do with the logic of its moral pessimism than any sense of *noir* fatalism.

Of the sample of non-spiv films, only *London Belongs to Me* and *My Brother's Keeper* can be aligned with *Boys in Brown* in addressing the cultural verisimilitude of British professional crime. Durgnat describes *London Belongs to Me* as an 'amphibian' because of its overlap between the crime film and the 'Ordinary People' genre that can be seen in other examples such as *Waterloo Road* and *It Always Rains on Sunday* (1997,

p.91). However, its hybridity is far greater than this analogy suggests. It has the ensemble cast of the community of everyday people who live in cheap apartments in Kennington, South London. The documentary realism of people and place is established at the beginning by the use of aerial shots that follow the course of the River Thames, and by a Voice-of-God narrated introduction. But its cultural verisimilitude is diversely achieved. It employs sentimental populism, social satire, comic caricature and subjective expressionism. Above all, though, this slice of 'shabby pseudo-genteel' (Durgnat, 1997, p.91) life is the melodramatic story of car mechanic Percy Boon's (Richard Attenborough) entry into crime.

There is plenty of crime content, such as a police raid on a Soho nightclub where Boon takes Doris (Susan Shaw), the woman he is trying to impress. He slides into car theft after he is exploited by the middle-man Rufus (Maurice Denham). This leads to the accidental killing of a girlfriend, Myrna (Eleanor Summerfield).¹⁸ A police investigation leads to a murder trial and a guilty verdict, but Boon gets a last minute reprieve from the death penalty. His morality about not touching 'hot jobs' is proven to be fragile, but nevertheless his corruption is a Biblical 'fall' of innocence corrupted and melodramatically persecuted. His murder conviction is seen as an injustice, but the moral polarities are not straightforward. This is because of the multiple characterisations and the film's dramatization of class antagonisms and prejudices, particularly the snobbish rejection of Boon by Doris and her mother.

The situating of Boon's place of work on the opposite side of the street from 'Funland', an amusement park where he met Myrna and was introduced to the car racket, is one of the few attempts at moral symbolism. Pathos derives from Boon's

¹⁸ Referred to in the credits as simply 'The Blonde'.

relationship with his mother and through the more general pity for his unfortunate condemnation. He is arrested in her presence and the guilty verdict is revealed at her sick bed. Particularly poignant is the moment when his spur-of-the –moment reciprocal Christmas gift to her is a blanket from a stolen car. But the film has more gentle satire than Manichean conflicts, with targets such as a fallible justice system. Rather than a search for moral clarity there is the gentle mockery of human pretensions, foibles and authority.

The backward glance of the film is also literal, to the period 1938-1939, immediately before and at the beginning of the war. The details of everyday life that recall the populism of the 'Ordinary People' film become upstaged by higher conflicts. However, there is some modernising of the form through the use of subjective narration. This formal device is mainly used to provide access into Boon's internal world, and particularly his feelings. His thoughts are made audible in voice-over narration, such as his response to his rejection by Doris that he likens to being discarded 'like a well-worn glove'. Boon's internal world is also visualised through a dream sequence in which an expressionistic style is used to convey his inner state through the use of the symbolist turmoil of fairground imagery.¹⁹

According to the 'book of the film' of *My Brother's Keeper*, the film's main purpose was

to suggest the tension and pathos of a man-hunt; the unthinking curiosity of the public, and the conditions under which the newspaper reporters, who satisfy that curiosity, work. (Britton, 1948, p.81).

¹⁹ The horror of his imprisonment and the threat of a guilty verdict are suggested in a short montage of canted images and stylised sets with a theme of mistaken and hidden identity. Boon mistakes Myrna for Doris and the police detective, Bill (Andrew Crawford), is one of many stereotypical moustachioed 'plods' who chase him around the funfair.

This is an accurate summary of the film and it draws attention to a desire not just to make an entertaining thriller, but also to use this form to offer a remarkable social critique.²⁰ Its subject is men-on-the-run. At the beginning of the film, two prisoners handcuffed together have escaped from police custody in the West Country. This story attracts the attention of the London newspapers, and reporters are sent to cover it. The original title of the film was *Double Pursuit*, which is more indicative of the thriller genre or mode than the one it was given for release, which refers more to its discursive preoccupations. The pursued are a repeat offender, George Martin (Jack Warner), who has been arrested for robbery with violence, and Willie Stannard (George Cole), a young man accused of ‘interfering’ with a young woman. The film attempts immediately to establish a thriller mood in the title sequence through the use of Clifton Parker’s musical ‘chase’ theme and images of the fog into which the prisoners have escaped. Tension and suspense accompany the attempts to evade recognition and recapture in a number of scenes. Martin disguises himself as an army corporal with an AWOL prisoner and just evades the police at the start of their escape bid. The scene in the barbershop is literally ‘a close shave’ in which Martin’s tonsorial treatment is made uncomfortable by the presence of a police sergeant in the next chair.²¹ Similarly, there are other near misses leading to flight and chase, but the most suspenseful moment occurs towards the end as Martin almost reaches the brow of the hill before he is blown up in a minefield.

²⁰ The structural weaknesses of the film, such as the mixing of the thriller and lighter honeymoon couple elements have been acknowledged and attributed to its institutional context as a ‘dollar crisis quickie’ (Durgnat, 1997, p.101), a Rank quota product made to meet the American boycott (Porter, 1997, p.123). At the time it was completed, *My Brother’s Keeper* had the shortest shooting schedule of any Gainsborough film (Britton, 1948, p.81). Structurally, however, there was always going to be a potential contradiction between the melodrama of the chase and the critique of press reporting. A film that sets out to criticise sensationalism is unlikely to be comfortable about exploiting its subject in the same way.

²¹ Interestingly, Martin’s barber is played by Reginald Beckwith, the author of *Boys in Brown*.

The police pursue the fugitives, but the film focuses on the journalists who are attempting to follow them both, and in particular Ronnie Waring (David Tomlinson). It is here that the thriller elements become diluted because the reporter is neither a heroic investigator substituting for the police, nor a hard-bitten journalist ruthlessly exploiting the criminals. Instead he is on his honeymoon with 'terribly sweet' Meg (Yvonne Owen). This nice middle-class couple are themselves victims of the exploitative newspaper industry, personified by Waring's bullying editor Wainwright (Raymond Lovell) who sleeps under a sign declaring 'NEWS IS MADE AT NIGHT'.

Thus a space is provided for exposition about crime reporting and law and order discourses. However, the light comedy of the interrupted honeymoon often has the effect of undermining the drama of the hunted men, especially because short sequences from different locales are edited together. For instance, the moment of expectancy when Martin calls on his old girlfriend Nora (Jane Hylton) is wasted because the film cuts to the tired honeymooners who can't find a room at the inn. At other times, also, minor characters less central to the escape plot, such as Martin's wife (Beatrice Varley) in London, are foregrounded, so that there is the multiple characterisation typical of the wartime community films about 'ordinary people' and seen in other crime dramas such as *London Belongs to Me* and *It Always Rains on Sundays*. But it is still one of the most significant films of the late forties because of the way that it combines the thriller genre with the reforming discourse of the Labour government.

6.4 Discourses of crime

The spiv films are notable for their portrayal of racketeering or spiv-like figures, but they differ in the nature of their discursivity in relation to crime and law and order issues. *Good Time Girl* and *Sunday* are inclined towards the realist mode in their dramatization of social control and offending, whilst *Night Beat*, *The Third Man* and *Fugitive* are less realistically discursive in this area. *Brighton Rock*, *Noose* and *Dancing with Crime* are more especially concerned with offenders and victims.

Good Time Girl is anxious with the causes of crime, particularly family disruption, and its treatment by the agencies of control, which are implicated in Gwen's criminalization. Viv Chadder's criminological analysis of the film suggests that it is more 'woman as problem' than crime as problem, since women are 'criminalized' under patriarchy for defying gender sanctioned roles before they break any criminal laws (1999, pp.66-91). There is, however, no similar concern with the causes of crime in *Sunday*. It presents a range of ordinary lawbreakers rather than evil wrongdoers as part of its community of offenders, police and the public without a sense of the need for reform or to deal with a law and order problem.

The problem in *Night Beat* is that of police recruitment after the war. There are some depictions of police training and procedures and discussion of the social status of the police, but it is less about the public role of policing or the problem of crime than a context for the collision of desire, jealousy and ambition in the personal lives of policemen and criminals. Felix is an ordinary lawbreaker whose pure white apartment has been decorated to obliterate the blackness he associates with his lowly origins. His desire to escape poverty is attributed to his mother's failure to recognise his true

innocence when he became a juvenile offender. This points to family disruption and inappropriate treatment typical of the positivist concerns of the liberal reform discourse at this time.

The Third Man, from its opening stock footage of the people and cityscapes, is securely grounded in a milieu of postwar racketeering, but its discourses about crime are preoccupied with universal themes about morality and human experience. *Fugitive* portrays a postwar criminal environment of police, offenders, informants, hideouts, underworld pubs, and so on, but it is a thriller that also lacks discursivity about, for instance, the causes of crime or punishment. However, it is discursive about the moral boundaries of crime, such as in Clem's distinction between the acceptability of dealing with nylons but not drugs, and the lorry driver with petrol coupons to sell who is able to draw a distinction between being crooked and committing crime.

Brighton Rock has the veracity of being taken from the newspaper headlines, and like *Sunday*, it also makes use of the authenticity of underworld cant, such as 'bogeys', 'brass' and 'milky'. However, the film is adapted without reference to the novel's sociology about the gangster's upbringing (Chibnall, 2000, p.138). As Chibnall argues, this removes the opportunity for the film to contribute to the discourses about the liberal reform of law and order at a crucial moment in the history of crime and punishment. Instead, the agents of social control, the public (Ida) and the police, expel the tyrant and achieve natural justice.

Noose takes a very fictionalized approach to the verisimilitude of the black market. The 'firm' of 'Sugiani & Gorman' is an exaggerated gangster business. Sugiani is ethnically 'other', but Gorman is morally differentiated as a 'basher', but not a

murderer. There is some background about Sugiani's impoverished past, but this is more in reference to the criminal perversity of his subsequent affluence than an attempt to dramatize the causes of crime. *Dancing with Crime* is grounded in the veracity of guns being brought into circulation by demobbed servicemen, but otherwise it is a highly fictional action melodrama, and one that does not otherwise attempt to engage with contemporary law and order issues.

The spiv films, then, are not very discursive about contemporary law and order discourses, but what kind of order do these fictional worlds reproduce in the act of representing it? First of all, there is a group of films (constituted by *Noose*, *Night Beat*, *Dancing with Crime* and to some extent *Brighton Rock*) that present a broadly conservative or reactionary position through the use of heroic fiction. In contrast, *Good Time Girl* and *Fugitive*, show a leaning towards left-liberalism, but not without an anxiety that can be set against the background of the postwar crime wave, and *Sunday* also demonstrates a left-wing concern for depicting a community of ordinary people. Last, *The Third Man* places disorder at the heart of the human condition rather than in the embodiment of the genuinely evil.

In *Noose*, Jumbo and Linda lead the forces of reaction against the exploiters of shortage that leave 'women standing in queues'. The indignant newspapers expose the 'gangster control' and their 'agents' of retribution (vigilante members of the public) organize a 'private war' code named 'Operation Noose', without any hint of parody against vengeful capital punishment. Natural justice teeters over into vengeance through the persecution of Sugiani. In its reproduction of order, there is a clear sense of 'them' and 'us', an edifying fantasy of middle-class social control. Jumbo and Linda are a

romantic couple on the verge of a family life of a kind to which they urge Bar Gorman to return.²²

Jumbo and Linda, unlike the family and friends who instinctively pursue justice in *Night Beat* and *Dancing with Crime*, have no special or personal relationship with the victims of Sugiani's conspiracy. They are acting on behalf of the public, as Ida does in *Brighton Rock* as a 'righteous heroine' (Chibnall, 2000, p.138). In *Night Beat*, however, the criminal world self-destructs under the force of middle-class authority of family and friendship. *Dancing with Crime* has a similar conservative fantasy of social control, but Ted is a more of a heroic workingman who acts on behalf of his friend and society more widely.

Good Time Girl and *Fugitive*, however, do not have the same heroic reactionary elements as these more conservative films, but they are not without their own anxieties about gender and class and fantasies of control, or being out of control as in the case of *Fugitive*. It has been established that as a social problem film *Good Time Girl* is contradictory, but its concern for underprivileged youth is left-wing reformist. It is confident about the causes of crime and critical of its treatment. However, it displays an anxiety about gender relations and young offenders that emerges as a fantasy of control of female sexuality, treated as a rather sensational and shocking escalation of criminality. In other words, it maps gender anxieties onto fears about rising crime.

²² For instance, Sugiani is persecuted by the woman who momentarily thinks about hitting him with his own knuckleduster, or when his own assassin strangles him an item of shortage, a woman's stocking. Its sensational melodramatic tone uses crime to create humour and voyeuristic titillation to provoke populist outrage, although one senses that without the existence of censorship restrictions it would have liked to make more overt references to the prostitution racket.

Fugitive also dramatizes an anxiety about gender and class mapped onto the criminal. Although it is a conventional thriller, the linking of sexuality and crime in the monstrous figure of Narcy is not achieved through the exploitation of the traditionally conservative 'shocker', but through a pessimistic tone that hints at anxieties about liberal reform and social democracy. Narcy's self-interest is a corruption of individualism. 'Don't be so reactionary, this is the century of the common man', he insists, to try and persuade a reluctant gang member to carry a gun. Crime and violent sexuality are linked in a cocktail of egoism and materialism, particularly in Narcy's treatment of women, but also in the disturbing murder of the drunken husband. These anxieties come together, though, in Narcy, a sexual and criminal tyrant who leans towards fascism. It is a film set in the fictional chaos world of the thriller that reproduces a middle-class fantasy of tyranny in which the perversion of need achieved through 'minor' lawbreaking escalates to systematic immorality.

As an 'Ordinary People' film, *Sunday* combines domestic and crime melodrama. The question of the disruption within the domestic world of personal relationships is addressed by the imaginary resolution of self-restraint that seems defensive of the status quo and not discursive about any need for change or reform.²³ The crime melodrama is split between a man-on-the-run thriller and the more mundane realism of petty criminality and black marketeering taking place within the community, which in effect polices itself through the figure of Inspector Fothergill (Jack Warner), a vigilant

²³ Like *Brief Encounter* (1945), it is a film about the sacrifice of desire to the needs of order and restraint. See also *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (1945).

‘copper’ in charge of his ‘manor’. There is no need to fantasise about control because order is imagined to be a balancing act within the organic community.²⁴

The Third Man is distinctive, of course, because its setting is distanced from the verisimilitude of British professional crime. Through the character of Holly one is forced to confront the evil practices of Harry Lime, his sinful racket and devil-like authority within the hell-like sewers. But Welles’ Lime never seems as dreadful as his crimes, and the character would reincarnate and endure in radio and television series. Lime’s criminality is shocking, but not sensational, and it is presented outside of the conventional secular moral universe of the melodramatic mode. The bureaucratic control of professional agencies interferes in the private lives of the public, such as in the confiscation of Anna’s love letters, and the killing of Lime feels like a loss for everybody concerned. Order is achieved at the cost of sacrifices, betrayals and guilts, universal themes that have kept the film as an enduring aesthetic object of appreciation and admiration.

A further insight into the reproduction of order in the spiv films can be achieved by looking at the position of the police as a structuring discourse. In *Night Beat* and *The Third Man* the police are quite central. In *Sunday* they are integrated but quite marginal, and in *Good Time Girl* they are virtually absent. Typically, though they are marginal figures, benevolent firm and fair liberal realists about the weaknesses and wickedness of crime and deviance. Examples include Detective Sergeant Murray (Gary Marsh) in *Dancing with Crime*, Rendell (Stanley Holloway) in *Noose*, Rockcliffe (Ballard

²⁴ Any further left-wing project than this is inhibited by censorship codes since changes from the novel make the film less morally ambiguous. In the book Whitey gets away with murder and Tommy is to be hanged for a murder he did not commit. It was felt, however, that BBFC restrictions would make this impossible to represent (Collier, 1947, p.10).

Berkeley) in *Fugitive*, and Inspector Fothergill in *Sunday*. Usually they are plain clothed inspectors or detective sergeants who provide background vigilance and parallel investigations to the victim-heroes and amateur sleuths, until they are pushed forward to make arrests and signify the restoration of order.

Neither the spiv dramas nor those professional crime films outside of the cycle are typically preoccupied with the reproduction of major conflicts between criminals and the police, except for films such as *The Spider and the Fly* and its nearest spiv equivalent is *The Third Man*. The police are background agents in *Boys in Brown* and *No Orchids*. In *Third Time Lucky* and *The Shop at Sly Corner* the conflict between offenders and victims is resolved with natural justice, although in the presence of a vigilant police force. However, in *London Belongs to Me* and *My Brother's Keeper* the police are not only part of the background of law enforcement, but more ambivalent figures implicated by social critique.

In terms of aesthetic practice, this is quite revealing about genre. Although these films have investigation narratives, they are not detective films with investigating policeman heroes. Often they have the criminal-centred narration of the gangster film, and the presence of the police is never sufficient to describe them as 'cops and robbers'. The dominant genre or mode amongst these films is the thriller, where for instance victims are placed between the villains and the police, as, for instance, in *Dancing with Crime* or *Fugitive*. The effect of this marginalisation of the police is an investment in the fantasy of the achievement of natural justice through the actions of individuals motivated by close personal or familial ties on behalf of the established order.

Non-spiv films lack the cultural verisimilitude of black marketeering, but how are they discursive about crime? *Boys in Brown*, *My Brother's Keeper* and *The Spider and the Fly* are dramas involving the agencies of control and offenders, although *The Spider and the Fly* has no real engagement with contemporary law and order issues.²⁵ *London Belongs to Me* is particularly concerned with the relationship between an offender and the public and a gentle critique of authority, but its retrospective populism does not dwell on the causes or treatment of contemporary crime. However, it shares with *Boys in Brown* and *My Brother's Keeper* a left-wing or liberal attachment to the realist mode. In contrast, *No Orchids*, *The Shop at Sly Corner* and *Third Time Lucky* are dramas about offenders that lack any overt references to contemporary law and order discourses.

A badly executed and violent jewellery robbery opens *Boys in Brown*, but the police quickly round up the getaway driver, Jackie, and the other known offenders. The police are firmly in control of crime, but in the film's terms this intervention is too late. *Boys in Brown* expresses a desire to prevent disorder rather than contain it. This is evident, for instance, in the governor's obsession with rehabilitation, his detailed knowledge of the personal circumstances of the 'boys' and his direct intervention into the community to make it work. The film demonstrates a need for the punishment and rehabilitation role of the Borstal system, and its social positivism draws attention to the causation of family breakdown, but there is an underlying anxiety about juvenile crime because it cannot be totally understood and remedied. The film's analysis of 'how things are' points to a crime problem that to a certain extent can be accounted for, but its vision of 'how things should be' is not the control of crime so much as its elimination. It is idealistic, but its idealism is qualified by a gentle pessimism.

²⁵ Other than an atmosphere of a modern incompetent and hypocritical bureaucracy.

This emerges most forcefully in the final scene of the conversation between the governor and his assistant as they look down through a window to the exercise yard full of boys below. The theme of the conversation is an analogy about the 'wheat and the chaff'. This refers to the identification of which boys will respond to rehabilitation, which ones will be fertile subjects. The governor insists that it is not about identifying the wheat from the chaff, but 'to find out *what is the chaff and why*'. In other words, the problem is the unresponsive, 'bad' youths who appear to be society's real victims, but for some undiscovered reason. The different behaviour of the boys brings into question the explanation of a root cause in inadequate parental circumstances. The governor's pessimism about the project of reform and rehabilitation is linked to empathetic identification with the boys' will to escape. His philosophical conclusion is that we are all 'trying to escape from some prison of our own making'. There is a sentiment, then, that perhaps society should look at itself more closely because the agencies of control are mainly dealing with the aftermath of a crime problem, and not its genesis in a more profound social malaise.

My Brother's Keeper is even more idealistic about the need for change and reform. Murphy describes George Martin as 'a complex mixture of good and bad, a clever, resourceful man warped by years in gaol' (1992, p.176). In melodramatic terms, he is not a straightforward victim-hero because of the 'bad' things that he has done, but if he is bad it is because of what society has made him, through 'the residual effects of the war, in media manipulation and the quest for notoriety, and in defective personal relations' Landy (1991, p.261). Landy places Martin within the context of 'Social Misfits and Malcontents' and stresses his psychological treatment. Clearly, there are elements of mental illness. His wife refers to a schizophrenic-like quality of his

personality, someone who receives a medal for bravery and then deserts the army. However, Martin's malaise is not post-traumatic, nor does it result from a loss of purpose in peacetime, as with Clem in *Fugitive*, but is just the latest manifestation of a long history of inappropriate treatment and deprivation. Towards the end of the film, his wife reflects that they have spent so little time together as a married couple, just three out of twenty-two years. She equates wartime with prison service, fourteen years in gaol, five in the army.

Martin's brutality, then, is shown to be the result of a more systematic failure of authority, the police, the courts, the state, and by extension, the rest of society. This emerges because it is only the women, his wife, Nora, and Meg, who are willing to give Martin a chance. It is the 'sisters' who are the most 'brotherly'. They are given the moral high ground which allows the critique of authority to be voiced.

A key moment in the film is its most expressionistic and ideologically revealing one. Following the arrest of Stannard for Martin's murder of Hodges, Martin returns to Nora for help. During their conversation, shadows from netting on the windows fall on them, like a cage, and she confronts him with the 'truth' about his condition:

You were like him [Stannard] once George. Have you forgotten? Got their hands on you early didn't they? They finished you all right...They turned you in to a pretty tough specimen didn't they? Well I'm not standing around while they turn him in to one of your sort just for the want of a helping hand.

Nora's accusation is that *they*, authority (the police, the courts, prison, the army), have created Martin, and that the pattern is about to be repeated with the falsely accused Stannard. Later, Nora, with a sense of righteousness, will lie to the police about being a witness to 'save' the youth. In a melodramatic last minute escape, Martin flees, shamed

by what he has become. Cornered, the 'Monster' harangues the assembled crowd who has 'created' him, before his self-destruction.

Martin's criminality, then, is blamed on society. His wife reflects that 'He could have been a great man really, if things had worked out different'. The film rejects an essentialist explanation in which people are born 'bad'. A quotation superimposed over the final image of the film, taken from Henry Hassett Browne, attempts to anchor the cultural responsibility for Martin's 'evilness':

All men are born brothers, and anything that hurts my brother hurts me.
If my brother commits a crime, I am a criminal; If he sings, there is music in my heart.
Before you have dealings with any man, ask yourself: 'Am I my brother's keeper?'
The answer is 'Yes'.

These are sentiments that are very much in line with the collectivism of the postwar Labour government. The significance of the film's social critique is that it looks forward to a remedy in reform and a change in behaviour, rather than supporting melodrama's backward search for lost innocence. From a criminological perspective, *My Brother's Keeper* is confident about attributing blame for crime to all of society - the agents of control such as the police, the public and irresponsible journalism. This contrasts with *Boys in Brown*, which struggles to identify what has created the young men who do not respond to punishment and rehabilitation.²⁶

The liberal populism of *London Belongs to Me* is more concerned with justice and social consensus that it is about criminal disorder. As a juvenile offender, Percy Boon drifts into crime, but there is no moral panic or analysis of a social problem. Boon's

²⁶ *My Brother's Keeper*, like *Now Barabbas was a robber...* (1949) is also discursive about the capital punishment debate. Meg likens capital punishment to the morality of the 'concentration camp'.

father-less condition is not an issue. Similarly, Boon's taste for American crime comics is not so much a concern about media effects as a marker of social identity. In contrast to *The Blue Lamp*, which has a communal exorcism of crime, *London Belongs to Me* has a community that can accept the problem of crime in the context of its mild anti-authoritarianism and liberal populism. This sensibility is revealed in the low life microcosm at 10 Dulcimer Street in the year prior to the war, with people who may or may not have survived the long conflict that followed. Its narrative project, signalled by the opening and closing narrator, is to suggest that the row of 'fine houses' that are now cheap apartments for rent can still be seen to be fine *because* of the people who live in them. This is achieved by using a melodramatic crime story that allows the Josser family to abandon their own class interests for a just cause. Crime is shown to flow from human weakness, and 'finesses' in the people is a sentimental revival of wartime sacrifice.

No Orchids provides a stark aesthetic contrast to this backward looking populism, even if the moral pessimism of the novel was softened by popular film romanticism. Stableford argues that what was distinctive about Chase's book was that it showed that the author had concluded that the pleasurable essence of the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction was the violence and gunplay that he put at the centre of his 'vision of Hell' (1991, pp.48-51), and the film carries this through to some extent. This aesthetic has no interest in the cultural verisimilitude of the contemporary British underworld. It is a highly stylised drama of offence and victimisation. Stableford suggests that it is a fictional world that was capable of revealing, through the brutality and toughness of gangsters, something about the reality of organized crime and the more general drift of social change. According to the publisher's blurb, the novel was written in 'an age of

realism' (Stableford, 1991, p.48). Its significance as a film is as a challenge to the existing order of British culture during a period of sensitivity about crime and punishment. What tends to get overlooked about this gangster film, though, is that there is moral pessimism in the nastiness of crime, but there is not a moral vacuum. Crime is not shown to be out of control. In fact, the script works hard to create moral goodness out of Chase's abyss through the melodramatic mode.

Whereas crime films such as *Boys in Brown* and *My Brother's Keeper*, that privilege the mode of realism, are dramatized in favour of social change or reform, the more melodramatic fictions of *Third Time Lucky* and *The Shop at Sly Corner* use criminal disorder as a disruption towards resolutions that, like *Sunday*, are conservatively addressed to social relations more than crime. For instance, there are two criminal worlds centred on professional gambling presented in *Third Time Lucky*. There are the 'high society' clubs and bars with their casinos hidden behind sliding walls, and cocktails before dinner shot in bright studio naturalism. Here the gentle vice of upper-class gambling over games of baccarat or roulette takes place, turning people old before their time into weary, hollow eyed addicts. The gambling den, or 'spieler', however, is presented as a more visually and metaphorically darker place, a literal underworld in the cellar of a billiard hall. This low life criminal milieu extends to greasy 'caffs' and dog tracks, a threatening world where criminals gather to play 'craps'. But the crime of illegal gambling is not presented as a disorder that needs to be controlled. It merely provides a generic and cultural space where villainy can reside and be exposed, a villainy that is melodramatically realised more in terms of a sexual threat than law breaking.

6.5 Discourses of masculinity

Professional crime films of the late forties are notable for their discursivity about gender anxieties and instabilities, particularly in relation to the maladjustment of ex-servicemen. However, the films also depict a variety of 'troubled' masculinity and there is a general lack of more 'reassuring' images of masculinity. It is suggested that in the postwar British crime film the underworld functioned like a 'dark mirror' of the paternalistic structures of the welfare state and provided a context in which contemporary unease is reproduced, and solutions searched for (Chadder, 1999). *Good Time Girl*, for example, draws upon the loosening of women's traditional domestic role, the loss of male authority within the home, and the loss of heroic action with problematic absorption of masculine energies, imagined as resolvable through the strengthening of paternal care and self-suppression of female desire (p.70). This analysis is convincing, but the acuteness of Gwen's subjection to men's desire, seduction and conspiracy also indicates that there is an anxiety about male predatory behaviour that problematises male sexuality as much as Gwen's refusal of her domestic role and lack of self-control, though obviously there is no feminist discourse that addresses it.

Other spiv films also make similar links between crime and predatory male sexuality, most notably with Sugiani in *Noose* and Narcy in *Fugitive*. In *Dancing with Crime*, however, there is only a more general association of the criminal gang who use the Palais de Danse as a front for their activities and a place to meet hostesses, women for hire. And in *Night Beat*, Felix is as much an object of desire as a predator, and the blame for his infidelity is more attributable to Jackie (Christine Norden), a nightclub singer. She is a 'bad' woman whose lack of sexual self-restraint is driven by a love of

materialism, an underworld perversion of affluence. Lou Hyams in *Sunday* does abuse the power of his social position acquired through the black market to ingratiate himself with women, but not with the violent threat of Sugiani and Narcy.

The underworld in *Sunday* is too integrated into the social fabric to be a 'dark mirror', but the gender anxieties and instability identified by Chadder are reproduced in the privileging of feminine subjectivity characteristic of domestic melodrama, such as in the flashbacks given to Rose and Vi and the prominence given to the wife's perspective on adultery through the character of Sadie Hyams. But they are also reproduced in the crime melodrama. Tommy, like Clem in *Fugitive*, is a hunted man, a thematic of this period (Murphy, 1992, pp.175-178; Landy, 1991, pp.269-277), and one that dramatizes male suffering and troubled masculinity. In terms of masculine melodrama, both men's physical suffering is recognised by women who help to repair some of the damage, as an acknowledgment of the virtue of their recovered agency. Tommy's desire to escape to Cape Town, blocked, literally at one point by railway crossing gates, is the dream of a 'new start', a return to 'lost' authority.

Not all of the spiv films, though, conform to this pattern of gender representation. In *Brighton Rock*, for instance, Pinkie is an exceptionally central criminal figure for this period, but he is more a suspect being tracked down than a man-on-the-run. Landy's feminist interpretation of Pinkie's 'troubled sexuality' is that his misogyny is the real "crime" that is confronted by Ida (1991, p.443). He is sensitive about his sexuality and when teased about his wedding night he responds with violence. However, in the film version he is more troubled by his status within the underworld, his standing in the gang and in relation to Colleoni, and eventually by Ida's investigation, rather than his

sexuality. It is not a film that concurs with the logic of the underworld as a dark mirror of melodramatically reproduced gender anxieties. Similarly, *The Third Man* ignores the sexual threats of gangster or *noir* melodrama in favour of realism about emotional relationships.

Of the non-spiv films, films such as *No Orchids* and *Third Time Lucky* reproduce the dark mirror trope of materialistic gender relations and class instabilities. In *No Orchids*, for example, British class is a more discursive subject than the 'American dream'. The film dispenses with the novel's sexual torture of a rich heiress who is destroyed by a contaminating criminalized culture obsessed with money, and the anguish is replaced by a romantically melodramatic resolution in which victimization is recognised and rewarded. Miss Blandish lives in a world, according to the newspaper headlines, in which 'lucre links with lucre'. Her wishes to find a 'real man' are blocked because of her social class in which marriage is a loveless contract. The film opens with the cold rituals of her existence as a chain of servants elaborately deliver orchids. Her fiancé recognises that in order to seduce her he must take her away from this environment to a roadhouse to 'melt the ice in her veins', which leads to her abduction. Her value as a woman is in terms of her sexuality and her wealth, not her love.

Slim rescues her from the predatory Bailey and his gang, but he in turn has to be saved by her love. They are both victims of materialistic gender relations. Miss Blandish lives in a world where there is too much money, and Slim's is driven by a lack of it. Johnny needs 'dough' to buy a fur coat for his girlfriend, so he sells information to the criminals about Miss Blandish's roadhouse trip, the catalyst of 'easy money' that starts the chain of crime. The criminal world is also a terror based on violence and tough

masculinity, and this is an obstacle that has to be removed in order to form the perfect romantic couple. It has to be shown that Slim is not 'slow death'. This is achieved through (masculine) action and (feminine) emotion. Slim does not kill or rape Miss Blandish, and so proves his 'true' character by his actions. But this revelatory process is also an emotional battle in which her attempt to make him 'a little more human' is a negotiation with the tough masculinity of his competitive position in the underworld.

In *Third Time Lucky* discourses about gender relations in the late forties concern the cultural verisimilitude of the search by contemporary single women for husbands. It is in this context that the *noir* melodrama is an up-to-date form for the expression of urban experience. Joan's room mate, Peggy, is sceptical about the men they are likely to encounter, but hopeful that the next one will not be a typical man - a sexual predator. Fortunately for Joan, Lucky proves to be different. His invitation to her to stay with him does mean separate rooms. His goodness is revealed and contrasted with Flash (with cash) whose villainous threat is sexual. He uses Lucky's gambling debts to try to 'purchase' Joan.

During this period, representation of the underworld may have mainly focused on the masculine structures of organized crime (Chadder, 1999, p.66), but without the equivalent of the urban tough guy type of masculinity of American popular culture (Spicer, 1999, p.86), and also more generally eschewing traditional heroic fiction. *Noose*, *Good Time Girl*, and *Sunday*, for instance, all have central female characters. More traditional heroic action, however, can be found in *Night Beat*, *Dancing with Crime*, *Fugitive*, and partly in *Noose*, and it is significant that it is in these films that discourses about crime and the maladjustment of ex-servicemen are reproduced.

As described earlier, the device of pairing ex-servicemen together was used to tell moral tales of contrasting fortunes in *Dancing with Crime* and *Night Beat*. One comrade adjusts successfully to postwar life by appropriate use of their masculine energies, whilst the other opts for the underworld perversion of paternal structures, heroic agency and financial security. Officers, however, were more likely to be treated as individuals. Clem, for instance, is ex-RAF and neither straightforwardly innocent nor heroic, although one would be likely to identify with his moral stance against Narcy's dope racket. Clem has become so alienated from any sense of peacetime purpose that he allows his fate to be decided by the toss of a coin. In the underworld his class is recognised and his agency is restored, but it proves not to be so much a place of welfare as one of insecurity and monstrous masculine energy.

Ex-Army Captain Dick Tarleton (Denis Webb) in the B film *The Flamingo Affair* (1948) also attempts to cure his postwar malaise with women and drink. Dick lives in a topsy-turvy world where he has been reduced in status from commander to menial. In voice-over he describes himself at the beginning of the film as 'now plain Dick'. He works as a lowly garage mechanic and in the evening he sits on a bar stool buying drinks from his old drill sergeant. In his own words, he has fallen from a 'noble profession' to a 'ruddy injustice'. In contrast to the satisfying meritocracy of wartime, peacetime seems to Dick an unfairly egalitarian society of nationalisation and popular education, where 'people forget too easily' about soldiers like himself. His own sorry situation is contrasted with the luxury afforded by criminality when he starts a relationship with black marketeer Paula Danvers (Colette Melville). To keep this relationship intact he has to live up to her lifestyle and so his corruption into crime seems to offer a possible compensation for his wartime loss.

Paula conforms to the 'spider woman' stereotype of *noir*. She is identified symbolically in the mise-en-scène by her association with the spider and web lighting decoration that hangs in the Flamingo Club where Dick drunkenly starts to narrate his story of entrapment. When Dick meets Paula at the garage where he works it is clear that she has prospered from the war and postwar scarcity. She arrives in an American car, covered in furs and accompanied by a well-dressed man. Dick is quickly subject to her sexual power but finds that he can only pursue his obsession if he can keep her in the luxury she privileges. 'Love's all very well', she tells him, 'but it won't pay for the ride'. Her black marketeering provides her with money and thrills. She removes his moral constraints and encourages him to join in her transgression. In a post-coital moment of plenitude, he agrees to her suggestion that he should rob his employer.

The ending of *The Flamingo Affair* is less bleak than the one in *Fugitive*, but it still offers no solution to Dick's loss of wartime status. He is able to temporarily recover some wartime heroism by fighting crime, in a reversal of his earlier intentions, when he had named his plan to rob his employer 'Operation Solo'. When real villains arrive with the same intent, he uses the military tactics that he remembers from the war, relayed to the audience in a subjective voice-over, to repel the raiders. The recovery of his wartime status brings about a revelatory conversion. He severs his last link with the criminal life by rejecting Paula. He returns her gold-plated cigarette case, realising that, like the case, she is a sham. His release from her influence is symbolically confirmed, when the spider and web lighting decoration collapses as he leaves the club at the end. However, he is unable to escape the postwar malaise that Paula had exploited. Like Ted in *Dancing With Crime*, Dick temporarily recovers a heroic masculine role by opposing crime. Unlike Ted, however, Dick has no 'natural' social role to return to.

In *Noose*, however, the relationship between the ex-commando officer Jumbo Hoyle and the gangster black market is quite different. He is not corrupted into a life of crime, but rather, becomes one of the primary agents of its destruction. Unlike the other ex-servicemen in these late 1940s films, Jumbo appears comfortably readjusted to civilian life and eases smoothly into his role as the natural leader of the vigilantes. As masculine melodrama, *Fugitive* is towards the pathos side of suffering whilst *Noose* is organized through the problem solving action side of the recognition of heroic virtue.

The maladjustment of ex-servicemen is not a theme of any of the sample of films taken from outside the spiv cycle, although Martin in *My Brother's Keeper* is a war veteran. The film's use of a hardened, career criminal is very striking. He is not somebody who has been coerced or has drifted into crime. Martin's masculinity is not so much 'troubled' as suffering and persecuted, more in line with the film's Biblical sentiment than melodramatic victimization. Social institutions are implicated in Martin's failure to thrive. This is someone who could be seen as being a complete menace to society, but the film is not anxious to condemn or panic about his deviancy.

However, other films do dramatize male anxiety and insecurity, but in quite different ways. As male melodrama, *The Spider and the Fly* has more inward cerebral reflection than the outer display of physical victimization or suffering. Despite the presence of Madelaine as an object of desire for the two men, it does feel like a very masculine film. The romance is never passionate. Ledocq and Maubert are paired on opposite sides of the law and with contrasting characteristics. The thief is a romanticised outlaw-rebel, whereas the policeman is an unlovable dour professional. There is moral ambivalence attached to these qualities. Ledocq's duplicitous alibis seem justified in the context of

his empathetic will to evade capture. Maubert's deceptions, however, such as his tricking of Ledocq's accomplice to make him an informant, feel much more dishonourable. This splitting of the central male character, along with other doubled male characters,²⁷ hints at psychological disturbance and Oedipal dramas. Ledocq could be seen as the rebellious child who is trying to break free from Maubert's paternal authority. However, because the film does not try to make guilt visible or dramatise reasons for suffering, there is only melancholy and pessimism.

The two (gentle)men on either side of the law are playing (not very) intellectual games of catch, in which the thief has been caught several times before when he has not had an alibi, and the false alibi becomes his obsessive proof of 'innocence'. The spy mission brings the men together, but their success is also a defeat. Madelaine is revealed in the stolen documents to have been a foreign agent and this brings an end to their love rivalry. Ledocq accepts the responsibility for this guilty competition and enlists, with hindsight, to perish at Verdun, fulfilling a heroic trajectory. This is a pessimistic gesture that seems as though it has come from the head rather than the heart. There is a victory of intellectualism over emotion. In terms of melodrama, it identifies what is wrong with the world, but does not offer a vision of what it should be like. Part of its negativity involves the resistance to, and finally rejection of, the feminine. The woman can be seen as the spider and the men are the flies, a thematic characteristic of *noir* at this time.

No Way Back (1949) also has *noir* thematics, but it is distinctly more lowbrow than Hamer's film, and, as indicated by the nihilistic title, it was one of the darkest films made in the late forties. Terence de Marney stars as a boxer, 'The Croucher'. Like the

²⁷ Ledocq hires a 'lookalike' to establish an alibi and actor John Carol plays a pair of brothers, Jean and Alfred, who are both Ledocq's accomplices. One dies trying to evade capture and the other is fooled by Maubert into betraying Ledocq over his brother's death.

ex-servicemen who become civilians, he loses a secure masculine role when he is forced to retire after losing the sight in one eye. He is further damaged when his materialistic wife, Sally (Shirley Quentin) deserts him when money runs short. 'I want better things from life. If I can't have them with you, well, it's just too bad', she informs him. She is a glamorous showgirl and the implication is that the relationship has always been based on money.

The Croucher becomes a drunken has-been until he is swept up from the pub by an old girlfriend, Beryl (Eleanor Summerfield), a 'good' woman whose love for him shakes him out of his self-pity. However, Beryl is a 'kept woman', the girlfriend of Joe Sleat (Jack Raine), the leader of a gang of dockland low lifes. Joe crows, 'I've got success and money and the girl's love me now'. He tries to keep The Croucher down by giving him menial jobs, but eventually his jealousy drives him to set up a raid on a jewellers as a trap to deliver The Croucher to the police. Beryl foils the plot and the three of them end up being chased by the police to a siege at a flour warehouse.

The Croucher's troubled masculinity is more than a subtext. This film is a crime melodrama that centres on the boxer's change in circumstances and his consequent confusion about his masculine role. The power of men is measured in this film through their ability to obtain women through money. Joe's villainy is that he achieves his masculine role through crime. Sally is also corrupt because she values the money more than the man. The Croucher measures his own worth in terms of being a champion with a glamorous wife. He clings to an ambitiously potent, heightened masculinity. In the warehouse, thinking about his past and looking at Beryl's photograph of him in his boxing prime, he confesses that 'A man wants to feel like that again', to be a 'real man'

and a 'big shot'. After Beryl has killed Joe, The Croucher receives reassurance when she tells him that 'she loved him then, she loves him now'. However, this does not seem enough. His loss seems unbearable. Accompanied by a loud speaker that blasts out a radio broadcast of his past glories to the assembled crowd, he leads Beryl to their off-screen deaths at the hands of police gunmen.

6.6 Summary

This was a period in which film-makers working in the production of A films acknowledged that the verisimilitude of black marketeering was a reality that could be represented in British films. The censors conceded that this was not prohibited subject matter, but at the same time their guardianship of the representation of violence meant that scripts were censored (Robertson, 1999), and sensitivity to these concerns can be seen in the aesthetic treatment of violence. There were critical objections, however, especially to the spiv films (Murphy, 1992), and the outrage that greeted *No Orchids* (McFarlane, 1999) marked that film as being particularly out-of-step with certain representatives of moral opinion. The extent of contemporary sensitivities to this representation is measured by the objection to films that had been made more 'wholesome' and had their moral ambiguities replaced by clearer melodramatic moral polarities. On the one hand, the criminal-centredness of the A film in the late forties signifies that it was regarded by film-makers as an important and relevant subject, but on the other the films presented an image that challenged the Labour government's project of progress, problem solving and reform.

The spiv films and those outside of this critical category can be differentiated according to their address, or lack of it, to the cultural verisimilitude of spivvery, but as

spiv and underworld films they vary considerably. The spiv films are also murder films that are typically dramatized through the conventions of the thriller and the melodramatic mode. Outside of the spiv cycle, murder could be used in a similar way, but less commonly. The spiv films are also distinctive for their *noir* expressionism and stylised representation of violence. Although the thriller and melodrama are the predominant generic verisimilitudes in all of the examples, it is possible to make sharp contrasts of aesthetic practice in the way that the films employ the mode of realism within their fictional worlds. Generally, however, the non-spiv films are less likely to address the contemporary cultural verisimilitude of professional crime than those within the spiv cycle.

Despite their cultural verisimilitude of black marketeering, the spiv films are not terribly discursive about contemporary law and order issues. In terms of the reproduction of order, they range from the broadly conservative, through anxious left-liberalism and conservative social realism, to more philosophical disorders of the human condition. The non-spiv films are also not very discursive about law and order. The more realist examples tend to be left-wing and less sensational or anxious about instability than the spiv equivalents, whereas the more melodramatic examples are similarly conservative about social relations though not very discursive about crime itself. In most films, either belonging to the spiv cycle or not, the police are not prominent. These were not dramas about the police, but more commonly criminal-centred or victim-hero narratives of thriller fiction or the gangster film, and this is what made them so controversial.

Some of the spiv films use the underworld as a 'dark mirror' of the paternalistic structures of the welfare state, whilst the non-spiv examples are less likely to reproduce gender and class instabilities through the representation of professional crime. In the spiv films the maladjustment of ex-servicemen is a significant theme of masculine melodrama, but not in the films outside of the cycle. The spiv films generally eschew the heroic fiction and tough guy masculinity of Hollywood melodrama, and non-spiv films are as likely to have ensemble casts as central male heroes. At this time, then, professional crime is on the whole not dramatized as a masculine arena of tough or reassuring heroic masculinity. More often the crime melodrama portrays troubled masculinities involving male suffering, victimization and malaise or presents crime as being symptomatic of contemporary gender anxieties and class instabilities.

CHAPTER 7

THE DRAMATIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL CRIME IN BRITISH FILM 1950-1956

7.1 Institutional, critical and social context

During this period, when British feature production averaged about 100 films per year, there were more crime films than in the late forties. Thirty-eight percent of films in the period 1950-1956 were crime features, compared to thirty-one percent for 1946-1949. Films with significant depictions of professional crime also increased between the two periods from forty-one to forty-seven per cent of all crime films. However, as established in Chapter 5, it was during the early fifties that the B film, or the second and co-feature, became the numerically predominant site for representations of professional criminality. Furthermore, although it is difficult to establish definitive figures given the complex financing of independent production, it appears that the independents were becoming the main producers of films about professional crime. A rough estimate can be given that suggests that whereas nearly half of all professional crime films released during 1946-1949 were made by either the major duopoly, British Lion or American companies, this figure fell to just over a quarter during 1950-1956

For whatever reasons - artistic, cultural, ideological or economic - the attraction to the verisimilitude of black marketeering, and organized crime more generally, as a subject for the A film lessened. Whether or not censorship made a difference is difficult to assess at this time because the practice of submitting scenarios to the BBFC at the pre-

production stage had ended in 1949 and files were later destroyed (Robertson, 1999, p.16).¹ There was no specific BBFC campaign against the further depiction of British gangland that had been conceded after the war, and Robertson concludes that the films themselves show a relaxation of censorship (p.22). This contrasts markedly with the concerns of the right-wing press campaign against crime in the media, but the press discourse about the media causing crime, which was particularly prevalent in 1953, does not appear in British film at this time. Post-*No Orchids*, the BBFC had been more cautious (pp.20-21), and the censors had particular concerns that may have created inhibition amongst film-makers towards such topics. Chief concerns at the BBFC were the depiction of violence, the employment of sensationalism such as sexual subject matter, the use of bad language and innuendo, and the need for 'proper' deference to authority. These concerns clearly would have affected the aesthetic-ideological form of crime films. For instance, this is illustrated by the treatment of *Cosh Boy*. It was given one of the first 'X' certificates, more to keep children out of the audience than to attract adults towards 'quality' films. It was censored by the BBFC for its treatment of crime and violence (the use of coshes and razors), undermining authority (the probation service, youth clubs and magistrates), and for its handling of sex scenes and language (Aldgate, 2000).

Censorship, however, probably had less of a direct impact on the patterns of production than other factors within the film industry. There were certainly industrial changes that affected both the way that, and the kind of, films that were made. Harper (2000, p.74), for example, stresses the importance of the 1948 Cinematograph Films Act, which abolished the renter's quota, leaving only the quota for exhibitors. This

¹ However, Rank for instance, continued to submit scenarios to the American Production Code Authority. For details on the censorship of British film in America see Slide (1998).

increased the market power of distributors. Distribution became the key element of vertical integration and there were more one-picture production companies than ever before. The significance of this is that, perhaps more than ever, films were made with particular consideration for the market linked to audience tastes.

This was very much the case for the director Lewis Gilbert at the beginning of his career in British B films in the early fifties. From his point of view, crime films were made because they could be sold. For him, working on 'Poverty Row' was about doing the best job he could with the material in order to be offered bigger budgets and greater creative control, which he achieved with *The Good Die Young* (1954), a crime film that will be discussed later.² *The Good Die Young*, made for the Woolf brothers, is adapted from an expensive property and it has a star cast. This contrasts markedly with his first crime film, *Once a Sinner* (1950), where independent producer John Argyle's method of budget control was to remove pages from the script when the £15,000 limit became threatened.

It is suggested that the strategy of appealing to the widest possible audiences led to the production of anodyne films and genres such as comedy and the war film, that were the most successful films at the box office because they appealed beyond the regular audience to the occasional cinemagoers (Harper and Porter, 1999, p.78). Stafford concurs that accusations of this being a 'safe' period may be justified (2001, p.109). He describes the early fifties as a period of relative stability of audience weekly attendance in a decade of overall decline of sixty-six percent³, and one in which the genres of comedy and action adventure had broad appeal to children and family audiences (pp.96-

² His breakthrough film was *Emergency Call* (1952), a B film made for £20,000 for Nettlefold, but which went out on the circuits as a first feature and grossed £140,000 (Lewis Gilbert interview with the author).

³ From thirty million attendances per week in 1951, to ten million per week in 1960.

98). For Stafford, the key year was 1955, the start of an audience downturn signalling the end of British cinema as a mass entertainment medium (p.97).

Thus, the institutional context for this period is a 'relatively stable industrial environment with a strong American presence and the last example of a mass-market cinema with a strong British production element' (Stafford, 2001, p.109). Part of this stability was a pattern of production in which British A films were mostly comedies and action adventures, while B films were mostly 'thrillers' (p.99). Simply, then, as discussed in Chapter 5, there were more crime films in this period because there was a profitable market in which distributors could sell B films for exhibition in Britain, or to television and overseas buyers, and there were more films about professional crime because there were more crime films.⁴

In this period, then, production companies who were able to secure regular deals with distributors, such as Tempean with Eros or those who had their own distribution outlets, such as Hammer-Exclusive, Merton Park-Anglo-Amalgamated, Nettlefold-Butcher's or E. J. Fancey-New Realm, were mainly making crime films under these market conditions. These few companies were responsible for about a third of all films made at this time that dramatized professional crime. The majors, however, contributed only two or three films a year to this representational theme. Rank was a more consistent provider than ABPC, who only supported a few A films, as did British Lion.⁵ Of particular note

⁴ This does not totally explain, however, why the crime film is more suitable to the low budget B film treatment than other genres, another question in need of future enquiry.

⁵ Rank made Pinewood's *The Golden Salamander* (1950), a couple of London-Independent films (*Street Corner* (1953) and *Forbidden Cargo* (1954)), British Film Makers' *Desperate Moment* (1953) and three Rank productions (*Eyewitness*, *House of Secrets* and *Tiger in the Smoke*) in 1956, a few satellite productions, such as Independent Artists' *The Dark Man* (1951), and B films by Kenilwoth and Major. ABPC supported Mayflower's *Cairo Road* (1950), Marble Arch's *The Yellow Balloon* (1952) and Diadem's *Contraband Spain* (1955), and British Lion distributed London-BLPA's *The Ringer* (1952), Ivan Foxwell's *The Intruder* (1953) and Marksman's *Beautiful Stranger* (1954).

amongst the majors, are Ealing's Dearden-Relf films that are seen to 'deal with the mechanisms of social control' (Harper, 2000, p.90).⁶

In relation to the critical context of British cinema in the 1950s, both Harper (2000) and Geraghty (2000) detect a conservative tone in the depiction of class and gender in films of the fifties, but Harper's emphasis on the political economy in relation to gender representation is concerned with issues that are beyond those of the present study.⁷

Geraghty's study, however, focuses in part on the popular genres of the comedy and the war film and it provides a relevant critical context to the present research for thinking about the crime film in the fifties. Both genres are seen to take 'class as the basis of their organisation' (2000, p.195). In the sub-genre of the caper comedy, for example, as exemplified by *The Ladykillers*, the property crime gang is seen as social microcosm:

British comedy imagines that the criminal, like other professionals, works within the hierarchies of a traditional system and so draws him into the traditional, class-based world of the British state. (pp.74-75).

Thus, the comedy is regarded as a genre that, even though it might employ ridicule or rebellion, is ultimately one which offers a reassuring sense of social 'place'. Its assertion of tradition can be related to the comforting retrospection of melodrama, but here in the comic rather than the dramatic mode.

Geraghty sees the war film as taking the 'theme of masculine behaviour' (p.175), examining 'how challenges to male strength, endurance and courage might be worked through and resolved' (p.174). Like the comedies, this genre is also seen as offering

⁶ *The Blue Lamp* (1950), *Pool of London* (1951), *I Believe in You* (1952) and *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955).

⁷ For instance, Harper attributes different constructions of femininity to production companies and the more general structure of the British film industry in the 1950s (2000, p.99).

reassurance as a 'site of security' for male roles (p.192), but as action melodrama, situating masculine performance in the recent past. Geraghty regards this as being particularly significant, since the common notion is that British films of the fifties suggest a period of masculine crisis (Landy, 1991; Street, 1997).⁸

A specific film, *The Blue Lamp*, provides another important critical context in relation to the representation of authority and conformity. The film's importance has been addressed with reference to both representation and genre. For instance, Barr (1980) stresses its significance as an Ealing film asserting English community at a time when postwar social change was starting to be 'unmistakably felt' (p.92). This sense of community is seen as being formed by the consonance of the middle and working-classes in response to a longing for 'popular moral authority' (Durgnat, 1970, p.137; 1997, p.101). Richards (1997) welcomes the film's revival of wartime 'people as hero' against the uncomfortable, 'alternative' image of national identity represented by Dirk Bogarde's masculine performance (p.145). Others, however, are more critical of these textual operations. Landy (1991, p.467) interprets the 'patricide' committed by the juvenile delinquent as a sign of repressed and repressive sexuality in support of the family and law, whilst Chibnall (1997, pp.139-144) emphasises the film's function as propaganda at a time of moral panic about lawless youth and murdered policemen.

In generic terms, the film is seen as the cusplate boundary between a waning spiv cycle and a waxing police cycle (Murphy, 1989; Wollen, 1998). Murphy, for instance, interprets the film's box office success as a sign of a change in public taste as the juvenile delinquent replaced the spiv villain (p.167). This positioning of *The Blue Lamp*

⁸ My own essay also suggests that there is an identifiable thematic of masculine crisis in the British crime film between 1946 and 1965 (Clay, 1999).

as a significant generic text, then, provides a useful starting point in the remaining sections of this chapter for thinking about the dramatization of professional crime as it unfolded in this period.

It is difficult to provide a generalized social context for the consideration of film in this period, since there was 'more than one 'society' and many moods in Britain between 1945 and 1968' (Wilson, 1980, p.2). However, what does emerge in conceptions of the fifties is an era of postwar continuity suddenly disturbed towards the end of the decade. Marwick (1990), for instance, stresses the continuities of history underlying changes in government.⁹ He sees the period 1945 to about 1958 as a 'social consensus' dominated by the legacies of war (p.12), in which signs of progress are measured by events such as the end of major foodstuff rationing as late as 1954. For Marwick, though, the last years of the fifties are particularly significant in that they show evidence of a long era coming to an end, a release from Victorian social controls, a breaking out of 'the straightjacket of dullness and conformity' (p.152).

Morgan (1990) provides a similar, but more political history. He suggests that from 1945 Britain is a society that sees itself as being in a period of progress, an 'era of advance', that peaks in the late fifties as 'one-nation Toryism', before shifting to a feeling of stagnation in the early sixties. Thus, the two historians share a view on the general historical drift of the period. They are conceptualizing the same historical events in roughly the same way, although they differ somewhat over timing and emphasis. Marwick sees the fifties as a time of repression followed by liberation during the last years of the decade, an opening of 'roads to freedom'. Morgan, however, registers a

⁹ The Labour Party kept the largest popular vote even when it lost general elections in 1951 and 1955, for instance (Marwick, 1990, p.99).

crisis in self-confidence, a shift from complacency to the self-doubt of a 'stagnant society'.

Thus, in different ways, whether using models of trauma or liberation, Morgan and Marwick are identifying the late fifties and early sixties as an important point of change in postwar society. A convergence of their histories provides images of the early fifties as, on the one hand, a divided, apprehensive society challenged by postwar change, but on the other subject to forces of consensus. Reformism, such as to welfare provision or public ownership, was followed from the late forties by a period of consolidation and uncertainty that led to a defensive 'complacency and insularity' (Morgan, 1990, p.156).

Whilst not wishing at this point to discuss debates about the nature of social organization in relation to such concepts as consensus and hegemony, it is important to stress that a conforming society subject to consensual processes does not necessarily suggest a unified one. Furthermore, the conception of this period as one of 'dullness and conformity' has only partial explanatory power, given that there is evidence to show that whatever arresting of social change was achieved at this time, it was done so with elements of struggle and repression. For instance, Steve Chibnall, in the context of a consideration of J. Lee Thompson's *The Yellow Balloon*, suggests that the period 1952-1954 constitutes 'one of the most repressive moments of post-war cultural history' (2000, p.43). Chibnall sees in the evidence of government policy and political discourse, press campaigns and in the concerns and actions of moral guardianship generally, a hegemonic circumspection about such elements as sexual behaviour and moral conduct, and particularly a disapproval of, and prejudice against, American cultural products.

A number of studies have highlighted the pressures to conform and the actions taken against deviancy at this time. For example, Higgins (1996, pp.267-305),¹⁰ investigating the sudden surfacing of homosexuality as an issue initiated by the arrest and conviction of John Gielgud around 1953-1954, concludes that competition amongst tabloid newspapers in the fifties produced a 'hysterical tone' of 'poisoning' propaganda against not just homosexuality, but any difference from normality imagined for the mass readership (p.282).¹¹ And the prejudice against American culture is evidenced by Barker (1984), who has studied the campaign against 'American-style', later just 'horror comics', that occurred between 1949 and 1955.¹² As with many campaigns against the media, the concern was the threat to childhood, but in this case the comics were also disliked for their 'low', 'unBritish' qualities (p.172).

These examples taken together, then, demonstrate how anxieties about sexuality or threats to national culture could initiate defensive reactions on behalf of 'normality' or 'tradition' as part of the postwar 'consensual' settlement. In particular, there was a repressive reaction to two forces – 'danger within' and 'foreign contagion'. The significance of this for textual analysis of films in this period is that these themes emerge within the generic organization and discursivity of professional crime films in the early fifties. With reference to the theme of foreign contagion, there is little direct address to anti-Americanism in the films. In fact, many B films had to embrace 'transatlanticism' as a condition of using American actors to make them more attractive

¹⁰ This is a revisionist account of the orthodox history that assumes that at this time there was an organized, McCarthy-like witch hunt against homosexuals, rather than an opportune configuration of hostility.

¹¹ This was at a time when the Metropolitan Police's public relations machine was greatly expanded under Commissioner Scott from 1948 to 1953 to the mutual advantage of the police and the press (Chibnall, 1977, p.51; Murphy, 1993, pp.137-8; Higgins, 1996, pp.259-260).

¹² A campaign that led to the Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publications) Act 1955.

to distribution overseas. But the threat of crime continued to be presented ideologically as something originating from outside of Britain or within as culturally other. More indirectly, the prejudice against American culture is contained within the representation of the threat of crime inside British society as symptomatic of the more general anxieties about social change that includes the Americanization of advertising and mass cultural commodities.

These issues are also particularly encountered in relation to gender. Wilson (1980), for instance, suggests that women were central to the scheme of consensus building and deviancy labelling after the war (p.2), bringing with it particular instabilities in the context of growing materialism and affluence. By the mid-1950s, spending on electrical, electronic and durable goods was rising nearly six times as fast as other consumer expenditure (Hopkins, 1964, p.309). Britain had entered an age of consumer durables in which the woman as homemaker was specifically targeted as 'the essential pivot of the People's Capitalism' (p.324). This situation was so pronounced that, from Hopkins' viewpoint looking back at the recent past, it caused 'a quiver of doubt', anxiety about the importation of 'Transatlantic approaches', and the vulnerability to the manipulation of women by advertising mass culture.

Since women were central to the attempt to create citizenship in postwar society, then the successful ideological construction of equality on the base of patriarchy must have had considerable influence on the course of masculine identity formations in the fifties. This social change constituted in part a feminization of society. This is meant not so much in the sense that men were any less powerful economically, politically or culturally, but more from the perspective of what men might have experienced or

interpreted from the outward signs of social change, particularly concerning consumption. Men were also indirect targets of consumption as providers of income in their traditional roles as 'breadwinners'. An important challenge to this was women's new 'dual role' as homemaker and part-time worker (Wilson, 1980, p.188). Similarly, men's horizons were being correspondingly prescribed by discussion of the 'companionate marriage' (Segal, 1988, pp78-79; Geraghty, 2000, p.34) or 'new informal partnership family roles' (Hopkins, 1964, p.201). Within traditional gender roles, men were encouraged to be more domestic, if not domesticated, more 'home-based', but not 'house-trained' (Segal, 1988, p.80).

There were, then, a number of challenges to traditional roles and responsibilities as the result of real and idealized social changes, and these fed into discourses of masculinity in crime films in the early fifties, as they did into cultural discursivity more generally. Segal, for instance, suggests that there was considerable conflict about male identity in the 1950s through the opposition of 'faces' of masculinity such as between the new, family man and the wartime heroes of popular fiction who operated as outsiders from sex and family (1988, pp.87-89), between men as agents or as responsible subjects of obligation and consumerism. From the late forties, themes related to gender relationships, such as male agency, responsibility, desire, self-restraint, and entrapment, were particularly explored in *noir* fiction in which women provided fatal attractions. By the late fifties, women at the centre of the ideal home had become a focus for the dissent against the establishment in the literature of the 'Angry Young Men' (Segal, 1988, p.80), but this was only part of what is seen as widely held sentiments of misogyny and homophobia reflecting 'contemporary anxieties over manhood' (p.85).

Law and order discourses, at this time, also show evidence of anxieties about postwar society, and none less so than those concerned with juvenile delinquency (Chibnall, 1977, p.52). Up until 1952, the number of juvenile court cases was gently rising despite earlier liberalized corrective punishment (Stevenson, 1989, pp.70-71). In contrast to previous years of reform, the period 1949-1953 was a time of 'relative authoritarianism' in which public opinion was gauged in favour of a more punitive approach (pp.78-83), and legislation included the Prevention of Crime Act (1953) that criminalized the carrying of weapons. The 'cosh boy' menace of the newspaper headlines and the killing of six policemen in the years 1951-1952 were particular causes for concern. Senseless violence fused with youth crime in debates about too much or too little welfare state, lack of or excessive discipline, and harmful media, such as 'Dick Barton' on the radio (Hopkins, 1964, p.207).

The delinquency issues were especially focused around the Craig-Bentley case following the killing of P.C. Miles in November 1952, in which the reality of the incident was lost amongst the press outrage at youthful lawlessness (Chibnall, 1977, p.56). The tensions between modernising reforms and traditional morality were painfully encapsulated by this miscarriage of justice, in which the under-aged killer was imprisoned and later rehabilitated, whilst the mentally immature co-accused adult was executed against the will of the merciful jury.

Years later, as part of Derek Bentley's sister Iris' campaign to clear his name, she recalled Christopher Craig's fondness for gangster films and the way he used to dress like 'a little Al Capone', whereas Derek would watch any film with Betty Grable or Jane Russell (Bentley, 1996, pp.91-98), inferring which was the more malevolent

influence. Closer to the fifties, Harry Hopkins drew attention to a moral laxity, the malign influence of Americanization as the years of the spiv turned to those of the teenager (1964, pp207-208).

In Hopkins' view, Britain was becoming an offshore island of mainland America. Amongst a long list of American imports and British imitations, he included armoured trucks and pay-roll raids (1964, p454). 'Project crimes', such as wage snatches, hijackings and bank robberies were becoming a feature of postwar crime (Chibnall, 1977, p.64). The Eastcastle Street mail van robbery in 1952, for instance, in which £287,000 in used notes was stolen, was 'the symbolic robbery of the period', where the gang's preparation included practising under the cover of making a crime film (Campbell, 1996, p.50). It proved to the criminals and the police that careful planning could work, and so the London underworld followed their earlier success by taking £47,000 in gold bullion from KLM airlines in 1954, but as it will be shown, project crimes hardly featured in this period.

Less threatening to the police, however, was the drugs trade, which was a minor business in the underworld at this time and not seen as a major problem by the authorities (Campbell, 1996, p.248). The 1951 Dangerous Drugs Act regularized various statutes and narcotics, targeting possession and controlling use through legitimate sources. According to former Scotland Yard Chief, Sir Harold Scott, the legislation worked and drug addiction was not a widespread problem (Scott, 1965, p.135). In 1959, the Drugs Squad only had one car that had to be booked in advance (Campbell, 1996, p.248). It was a world problem, but not a local crisis (Morton, 1994, p.290), a vice resisted, according to Sir Richard Howe, a postwar head of the C.I.D. at

Scotland Yard, because of Englishmen's preference for Scotch whisky over drugs (Campbell, 1996, p.248). And yet the conspiratorial threat of drugs appears frequently in the crime film of the early 1950s.

For the postwar underworld, organized crimes such as protection, illegal gambling and vice provided the routines and rivalries of professional crime. Crime correspondents covered underworld villains, struggles and eruptions of violence, but there was no orchestrated or sustained probing of gangland (Chibnall, 1977, pp.63-65). Vice, however, was a preoccupation of the Sunday papers, particular at the *People*, where crime journalist Duncan Webb, from 1950 onward, exposed the Messina brothers' prostitution racket. The rhetoric of these public interest stories was condemnation and titillation, using the discourse of deviancy. Webb's front page attack contained language such as 'shameful trade', 'disgusting business', 'despicable brothers' in an 'unsavoury story' that would 'appal every decent man and woman'.¹³ However, there are very few films at this time that depict this underworld milieu.

There was no shortage of information for film-makers who wished to take their inspiration from newspaper headlines, although crime reporting was more preoccupied with 'bloody murder' than professional crime, human interest stories and sensationalism (Chibnall, 1977, p.65), where the threat of the death penalty could provide added drama. And this was also the age of 'the policeman as folk hero' (p.68). *The Blue Lamp*, for example, was turned into a play that toured and appeared in the West End in 1952, and into a television police series in 1955. Real policemen were also prominent, countering the gangster's self-publicity. Former Superintendent Robert Fabian of Scotland Yard, for instance, published a record of his cases in 1952 that became the basis of the first

¹³ The *People*, 3 September 1950, facsimile reproduced in Murphy, 1993, p.109.

police series on British television in 1954, presenting a re-assuring image of crime control. Negative publicity about the police did occasionally arise, for example, during a police corruption trial in November 1953, but the Scotland Yard hierarchy limited public damage by denying the existence of an internal report and privately not acknowledging any widespread presence of corruption (Murphy, 1993, p.135; Campbell, 1996, p.221).

This, then, is the context for thinking about the dramatization of professional crime in a period bounded by Ealing's presentation of police heroism (from *The Blue Lamp* to *The Long Arm*). This chapter will consider how the crime genre provides an outlet for the expression of conservatism and conformity, support for authority and the assertion of traditional hierarchies of class and masculinity. It will look at the construction of masculinities in terms of reassurance and anxiety and examine in generic terms how professional crime films draw upon the instabilities of the Americanization and feminization of culture, and the stabilities of police heroism.

7.2 Genre

A constructive starting point for a generic analysis of films in this period is to consider the suggestion that *The Blue Lamp* marks the beginning of a police cycle and *Night and the City* (1950) marks the end of the spiv cycle. This will be addressed by establishing the kind of films they are in comparison to those that followed. This specific enquiry will then be extended to situate these particular generic patterns in relation to those for the period of the early fifties, as a basis for thinking about the representation of gender and law and order discourses in the dramatization of professional crime.

Contrary to received critical perceptions, *The Blue Lamp* does not initiate or constitute the beginning of a police cycle in any straightforward sense. It is a film with a number of unique elements, making it an exception rather than a prototype for cyclical imitation. It is tied most closely to Muriel Box's *Street Corner* (1953), its 'female riposte' (Harper, 2000, p.194), and one of the few films to also have 'bobbies' as a central focus of crime control. More accurately, *The Blue Lamp* can be seen to be at the start of a significant presentation of law enforcement stories more generally, with investigation narratives featuring various agencies of control. Where this involved the police, however, it was typically the intervention of Scotland Yard detectives that was depicted as part of the verisimilitude of murder investigation. Thus, the underlying law and order image of this period is that of the professionalism of the officer-class and other agents of the modernizing state machinery, rather than the revival of wartime populism and communal microcosm associated with *The Blue Lamp*.

Approximately, just over a half of all films featuring significant depictions of professional crime in this period are investigation narratives, in which, mainly, law enforcement agents and other professionals bring about the restoration of order; Scotland Yard men in *The Dark Man* (1951) and *The Long Arm*; foreign national police in *Cairo Road*; American agents in *The Diamond* (1954) and *Assignment Redhead* (1956); international police, such as those in *Portrait of Alison* (1956) or *House of Secrets* (1956); customs police in *Forbidden Cargo* (1954) and *River Beat* (1954); insurance investigators in *The Hideout* (1956); probation officers, *I Believe in You* (1952); medical professionals, *The Brain Machine* (1955) and *The Sleeping Tiger*; reporters, *Judgment Deferred* (1952) and *Escape By Night* (1954); private investigators, *The Gelignite Gang* (1956); and members of the public motivated by personal interest,

such as the Foreign Office code breaker in *Cloudburst* (1951), the test pilot in *The Lost Hours* (1952) or the businessman in *The Intruder*.

Although *The Blue Lamp* did not initiate a coherent 'police cycle', it established that cooperation between the authorities and the film industry was possible, to fulfil any desired authenticity of production or favourable publicity. The film 'received unprecedented cooperation from Scotland Yard' (Chibnall, 1997, pp.137-138), setting a precedent that was exploited by other A films. Both *Street Corner* and *The Long Arm* were made with advice from New Scotland Yard,¹⁴ and *Forbidden Cargo* and *Cairo Road* acknowledge the assistance of numerous forces and organizations, the latter made, according to the opening titles, in tribute to 'their relentless efforts to pursue and suppress the evil traffic in obnoxious drugs'.

Thus, *The Blue Lamp* was influential as a model for making propaganda through the celebration of those who fight crime, but in other respects it was not closely imitated. In the three years 1950-1952, for instance, a reasonable time in which one can look for evidence of a police cycle, one finds only *Cairo Road* as a near cousin set firmly within a crime fighting police institution, or else Hammer's very dissimilar B murder mystery, *A Case for PC 49* (1951). More typical at this time, then, were the traditional murder thrillers and mysteries, with investigating officers from Scotland Yard, usually Inspectors or Superintendents played by character actors or B film leads. Examples such as the B film *Files from Scotland Yard* (1951), starring Reginald Purdell as Inspector Gower, or the two Bushey productions with Inspector Morley (Patrick Barr), *King of the Underworld* and *Murder at Scotland Yard* (both 1952), consisted of the policeman's

¹⁴ However, Muriel Box recorded in her diary that they disliked her film (Harper, 2000, p.194).

investigation of multiple cases, but more common was the centrality of the crime and its protagonists and a more marginal investigating officer.

The undercover policeman plot motif was also a feature of this period, illustrating the influence of American crime fiction. MGM British, for instance, made *Calling Bulldog Drummond* (1951), in which the police have to resort to the assistance of the 'social avenger' and an undercover policewoman to apprehend a robber gang. In the B films *The Six Men* (1951) and Tempean's *13 East Street* (1952), however, it is the police detectives themselves who infiltrate organized gangs of property criminals. The film with the closest resemblance to *The Blue Lamp* at this time, apart from *Street Corner*, appears much later, in 1955 - *Police Dog*, a B film that similarly cuts between the home and work life of a police constable who wants to arrest the burglar who shot and killed his colleague.

What precisely was *The Blue Lamp*'s legacy for law enforcement films and investigation narratives? Generically, *The Blue Lamp* is a combination of traditional crime melodrama with newer elements such as the police procedural fused with the revival of wartime populism through the depiction of a mobilized community. Melodramatically, it has clear moral polarities between the police and criminals, with some action, such as robberies and a chase finale. Dixon (Jack Warner) is a victim-hero whose death creates pathos. This is one of the film's expressionist moments, but it is also up-to-date in its use of documentary realism, such as in the use of locations and narrator, so that its wartime sense of communal values and dedicated professionalism is modernized. True villainy is revealed in restless and ill-adjusted youngsters who lack professionalism, self-restraint and social responsibility. Thus, it asserts a 'touching faith

in traditional virtues, in the ability of urban working-class communities to resist the lure of possessive individualism and “easy money” (Chibnall, 1999, p.145). And this is its melodramatic core, the presentation of ‘how it is’ and the idealization of ‘how it should be’.

The Blue Lamp reconfigures the community with police culture at the centre, and its foregrounding of police procedures marginalizes the heroic individualism more typical of melodrama. Investigative teamwork proceeds from a routine search for Diane Lewis (Peggy Evans), leading through vigilance, surveillance and pressure to her link to the murderer and his communal expulsion by the police and the underworld. *Cairo Road* also has police procedural elements as part of its investigative structure, and like *The Blue Lamp*, it has the recruitment plot in which the younger, less experienced police officer is successfully initiated into the particular requirements of the profession. But police procedures and initiation rituals were rather intermittent, minor constituents of law enforcement narratives. Films such as *The Diamond* or *Portrait of Alison* are somewhat unusual in the way that they foreground the science and bureaucracy of police investigation, and only rarely, most notably in *The Long Arm*, is the initiation ritual combined with the police procedural.¹⁵

Both *Cairo Road* and *The Long Arm* are more typical law enforcement films because they use the heroic individualism of action melodrama. Rather than the linearity of the melodramatic struggle between opposing forces, *The Blue Lamp* has the circularity of renewal and regeneration, as the police community is replenished by Dixon’s

¹⁵ In *The Long Arm*, however, the ‘Oedipal trajectory’ of initiation is rather different, since the patriarch renews himself. Sergeant Ward (John Stratton) learns through example, rather than by doing, about the demands of policing, when he is assigned to Superintendent Halliday (Jack Hawkins), whose successful confrontation of danger demonstrates his right to remain as ‘father’.

replacement, Mitchell (Hanley), on the beat. However, in all these films the melodramatic polarities are used in similar ways to chastise criminals for their lack of self-restraint.¹⁶

More commonly, though, the action melodrama of law enforcement narratives is less discursive about social malaise, allowing instead the heroic struggle against evil to speak profoundly for itself. In *Cairo Road*, for instance, particular attention is paid to the wickedness of the drugs trade, such as when Colonel Bey (Eric Portman) takes his new junior officer, Lieutenant Marad (Laurence Harvey) to the mental hospital to see the living dead victims of opium and hashish who have been reduced to 'nothing'.¹⁷ Both Bey and Marad suffer themselves, through blighted personal lives, as hero-victims of policing crime. Law enforcement is presented as a highly individualized and ongoing struggle. Melodramatically, the film searches for evil and finds it, but it can only conclude that how things should be is continued vigilance and duty against a war on crime that never stops. As one case closes, a telephone call signals the start of the next one. This would suggest that the circle of *The Blue Lamp* returns us to order, while the circle of *Cairo Road* returns us to chaos.

It is the heroic individualism of action melodrama exemplified by *Cairo Road* that is more characteristic of law enforcement films in this period than the police community featured in *The Blue Lamp*. In *13 East Street*, undercover police detective Gerald Blake (Patrick Holt) is placed in physical danger inside a gang of murderous property criminals, and although the police support him, his is largely an individual struggle against the gang's leader (Robert Ayres). Inspector Kenyon (Nigel Patrick), in

¹⁶ In *The Long Arm*, for instance, it is the burglar's wife's attachment to consumerism that seems particularly offensive and self-indulgent.

¹⁷ Recalling a similar scene in *The Third Man* between Trevor Howard and Joseph Cotten.

Forbidden Cargo, survives attempted murder by a drug smuggling gang led by Max (Theodore Bikel), who Kenyon reveals as the true villain through physical action and bravery. And, Richard Greene's American Treasury Agent is a 'clean-cut' hero conventionally rewarded with the 'girl' for vanquishing a forgery and smuggling outfit, in *Contraband Spain*.

Only in *Street Corner* is the police community returned to with particular emphasis, with some obvious similarities to *The Blue Lamp*, but with distinctive feminine differences. Its closest resemblance to the earlier film is its use of crime melodrama. Ray (Terence Morgan), like Riley in *The Blue Lamp*, is a disruptive influence whose criminal associates are rogue elements lacking underworld connections. They are unambiguous, predatory thieves who are dangerously hedonistic and lack self-restraint. However, the film's multiple narratives widen its concerns to the policing of childcare and the resolving of family disorder more than the solving of crimes (Geraghty, 2000, p.148). Its concentration on social problematics emphasises the need for collective care and concern rather than communal expulsion of undesirable elements, and its multiple stories, ensemble female cast, elliptical and parallel action and feminine subjectivity presents a contrasting realism to *The Blue Lamp*. It has the same circularity as *The Blue Lamp* since it starts and ends with policewomen on patrol, but the effect is rather different. Like *Cairo Road*, it presents an ongoing struggle, but one in which society has to be 'policed', not so much in terms of criminal disorder as a response to wider social problems involving women, work and home. The film's

conflicted feminist perspective in a cinema dominated by the moral certainties and heroics of masculine melodrama is particularly noteworthy.¹⁸

Further, if one looks aesthetically and ideologically at *The Blue Lamp* in comparison to the law enforcement films that followed, it cannot be seen to be archetypal. The police and underworld's communal expulsion of Riley in *The Blue Lamp* is an alliance of professionalism in which the underworld provides a reliable and restrained image of working-class solidarity, providing a defensive wall against the threat from 'outside' of the dangerous 'other' of inexperience, youth, lack of craft and firearm fetishism (Chibnall, 1997, p.142). Similarly, in *Street Corner*, Ray's gang are disruptive outsiders, but there is less of the sense of a working-class community defending itself. Instead, it is the middle-class professionalism of the agents of law enforcement that is especially privileged.

More common than the police film, however, is the thriller, and again the source of the threat of crime identifies it as a genre with a bourgeois sensibility. Often where organized crime is involved, particularly across national boundaries, it is the threat of foreign contagion that is uppermost, whereas with small gangs or individuals, the danger within is a dramatic focus, though both aspects can sometimes be entwined. For instance, in *Forbidden Cargo*, the customs police quickly capture a gang of liqueur and spirits smugglers who represent the majority of 'ordinary' offenders. However, this investigation leads to a 'different matter', 'one of the largest consignments of dope in history', a conspiracy masterminded from the French Riviera, but exploiting the gullible

¹⁸ Harper emphasises how it represents a 'new moral' order conflicted between women as professionals and a preoccupation with marriage (2000, p.149) and Geraghty acknowledges its shift of the police film from the public to the private sphere (2000, p.149).

and greedy London 'mews classes', who have been moving in the idle and glamorous world of couture.

A similar distinction between ordinary, 'known' criminals and dangerous, hidden villains is made in *Portrait of Alison*, a particularly good example of the police thriller (adapted from a television serial by Francis Durbridge) with danger within, but international in scope. The underworld is presented as consisting of mostly known criminals and members of the public who, according to Interpol Inspector Colby (Geoffrey Keen), 'will do some strange things for money'. The real threat is presented as coming from the uncertain identity of the head of 'The Arlington Ring', revealed as Henry Carmichael/'Mr Nightingale' (Allan Cuthbertson), through a script that takes great pleasure in undermining the pompous ostentation of the 'toff'. This representation of traditional elites as criminals can be seen in numerous police and detective thrillers, such as *House of Secrets* and *Contraband Spain*.

The Blue Lamp, then, was in many ways, not generically typical of the law enforcement and investigation narratives of this period. It was a unique, propagandistic intervention, an 'animated recruitment poster' (Chibnall, 1997, p.137) that attempted to create a sympathetic image of the police by demonizing delinquent males at a moment of crisis in the postwar settlement. More characteristic, was the internationalism of A films such as *Cairo Road*, *House of Secrets* and *Contraband Spain*, and the 'transatlanticism' of B films such as *13 East Street*, with its use of North American actors, Americanized dialogue (dames, dough and stool pigeon) and 'cops and robbers' plot fusing Scotland Yard cultural verisimilitude with American detective fiction. More than the microcosmic West London police station community of *The Blue Lamp*, a

recurring home-abroad nexus is presented, with Britain as a trading island nation with its vulnerable coastlines and its *Pool of London* (1951), an international community and film market.

The Blue Lamp was released at the beginning of a shift towards law enforcement films and a period of 'post-spivery' characterized by a more marginalized depiction of the cultural verisimilitude of black marketeering and the underworld more generally. In this sense, *Night and the City* can be seen as a significant marker between the late forties and the early fifties, although in some ways it is quite distinctive from most spiv films. The 'spiv cycle' was characterized by underworld films that referenced the contemporary cultural verisimilitude of shortage rackets through the varying centrality of the spiv villain, murder, melodramatic conflict, and the action and suspense of the thriller. Fabian (Richard Widmark) in *Night and the City* looks like a spiv, but his hustling opportunism belongs to the moral ambiguity of the gangster film, and the fatality and corruption, along with the film's highly expressionistic visual style, is the London underworld filtered through American *noir*. Nevertheless, no film in the following six years depicts such a thoroughly pervasive underworld milieu as *Night and the City*.

Post-spiv crime films are notable for the way that predatory, rogue males replace spiv villains within their generic organization. For example, when Ginger (Michael Medwin) is demobbed in *The Intruder*, he does not become entwined with the underworld, but becomes a desperate, lone thief whose tribulations are revealed in flashback. Dirk Bogarde's Riley in *The Blue Lamp* and his Frank Clements in *The Sleeping Tiger*, a mugger forced into therapy by his psychiatrist victim, are typical, as is Maxwell Reed as

Independent Artists' *The Dark Man* or as Frank Smith in Ken Hughes' and Merton Park's *The Brain Machine*, the 'sick and dangerous' criminal with a malformed brain who is exploited by a corrupt industrialist threatened by strikes over the use of non-union labour.

Films such as these show a definite shift from the depiction of the racketeering of the early post-war years. The transition is particularly noticeable in examples such as *The Dark Man* and J. Lee Thompson's *The Yellow Balloon*. In *The Dark Man*, the black marketeering background to the double murder investigation is the routine, mundane 'sepia' trade in pork supplied to 'respectable hotels'. The spiv villain is the eponymous, yet nameless 'bogey man', the black-suited rogue male scavenger pursued by Scotland Yard. In *The Yellow Balloon*, crime is presented as being in a state of post-spivery in the passage from scarcity to burgeoning consumption. Len (William Sylvester) is a criminal whose 'business' opportunities have narrowed. As his friend, identified in the credits as only 'spiv' (Peter Jones), remarks, 'The bottom's dropped out of the nylon racket' and 'The mugs aren't as trusting as they used to be'. Len's desperation is gauged by his use of a child as his new 'mug' in the robbery of a public house. His parasitic presence is just one legacy of the war, a legacy that is still present, in films such as Tempean's *The Lost Hours*, in which ex-RAF pilots are operating as smugglers, but by this time the postwar goods rackets had shed their associations with spivvery to become part of the cheating and greed of the growing consumer society.

Thus, it is not that the activities of professional criminals or an underworld milieu is absent from British crime films in this period, but it is rare to find them occupying a central position. If criminal gangs were prominent, such as in Lewis Gilbert's and

Nettlefold's *Scarlet Thread* (1951) or *Calling Bulldog Drummond*, they tended to consist of morally unambiguous property criminals. Generally, the generic verisimilitude of the thriller, whether in law enforcement narratives, or more criminally-centred films, took priority over the cultural verisimilitude of the core activities of the underworld, such as protection, vice, gambling and project crimes.

It is significant that the crimes most often represented, other than property crime, at this time were those that were ideal for creating subterfuge and conspiracy: forgery, smuggling and drug trafficking. So little of either the generic verisimilitude of the gangster film or the cultural verisimilitude of British gangsters is present in crime films at this time. Ken Hughes' *Joe Macbeth* (1955), made independently for Columbia, is a gangster film set in contemporary America, but with gang violence and rivalry taken from 'classic' Hollywood gangster films and beyond that to Shakespeare. *Escape by Night* at least draws upon the newspaper exposés of gangland vice, but it is more about the cultural verisimilitude of crime reporting than organized crime. As a fugitive mobster thriller focusing on the last days of a double-crossed and ethnically Italian gangster befriended by a drunken ace reporter played by Bonar Colleano, it is very much imitation Hollywood, though lacking the sensationalism and action of crime melodrama.

Where films focus on offenders within the context of the underworld, they are often dramatized with recourse to the melodramatic mode. Merton Park's B film *Assassin for Hire* (1951) is set in the milieu of Soho 'caffs' and restaurants where the underworld hitman sets up his contracts and alibis. As a police thriller, it is structured as a conventional personal battle between the assassin posing as a stamp dealer and the

police detective who uncovers his true identity. However, the melodrama resides more domestically in the relationships of family life and the exegesis of the offender's motivations. The killer's support of his brother's attempt to become a concert violinist is a perversion of their mother's dying wish.

Similarly, *Soho Incident* (1956), by the same company that made *Joe Macbeth*, is a film that uses an underworld verisimilitude to present an edifying story of melodramatic victimization and last minute escape. It returns to the sports racketeering of the London underworld last featured in *Night and the City*, and again with a North American lead (Lee Patterson). However, whereas Widmark's Fabian is already a crook, a 'spider woman' who exploits his laxity corrupts Patterson's ex-Canadian airforceman, Jim Bankley, into crime. Jim's basic goodness is revealed when he baulks at the gang's violence, and the love of a 'good' woman allows redemption from easy money.

Likewise, not only is there a small number of British gangster films in this period, but also very few films about underworld project crimes, and where they do occur, the melodramatic mode is once again dominant. A feature of this period in the Hollywood cinema was 'the advent of the realistic heist movie *The Asphalt Jungle* (1951) and *The Killing* (1956)' (Hardy, 1998, p.134).¹⁹ This genre is seen as later evolving into the comic and parodic caper film (p.134), but in Britain it started as a comedy genre with examples such as *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) and *The Ladykillers* (1955). The heist film, then, has been valued for its realism as a thriller or as a sub-genre of the gangster film, but it also has melodramatic characterization and plot around the relationships

¹⁹ Other examples might include *Armored Car Robbery* (1950), *Kansas City Confidential* (1952), *Drive a Crooked Road* (1954), *Violent Saturday* (1955) and *Five Against the House* (1955).

between men, women and money, and this applies also to British heist films at this time (Clay, 1998).

The B film *Dangerous Cargo* (1954), produced by ACT Films, for instance, could easily have been presented using the generic verisimilitude of the heist film, but it is influenced more by traditional detective fiction by authors such as Edgar Wallace that was widely available in cheap paperbacks in the fifties. Thus, in *Dangerous Cargo*, a film based on the 'Battle of Heathrow', the gang leader has no close approximation to real underworld figures, such as Jack Spot, that were connected to the attempted robbery.²⁰ Instead the ringleader is Pliny (Karel Stepanek), a 'master crook' who keeps his identity hidden from the specially recruited gang of roughs and toughs by using his go-between Luigi (John Le Mesurier) and a radio intercom system..However, it does have the same kind of didactic, victim melodrama as *Soho Incident*, since it focuses on Tim (Jack Watling), the security guard lured by vice and threatened by violence to his family to become the inside man on the robbery. A particularly good example of the heist melodrama, though, is Lewis Gilbert's *The Good Die Young*. This features a mail van robbery without any underworld verisimilitude. Instead the project crime is committed by a group of disaffected men who become convinced that the proceeds of the robbery will help them to resolve their problematic financial and personal relationships with women.

The other major example of the British heist film at this time is Warwick's *A Prize of Gold* (1955). It illustrates a number of the characteristics of the dramatization of professional crime in this period. First of all it has the internationalism of other films

²⁰ This was the first major postwar project crime which took place in July 1948 at London Airport. A fight ensued between the robbers and the waiting police who were acting on a tip-off.

made in colour such as *House of Secrets* and *Contraband Spain*. Its American star, Richard Widmark, plays military policeman, Joe Lawrence, and it is set in the Allied sector of the occupied city of Berlin. Secondly, it draws upon a verisimilitude of post-spivery. That opportunities for black market scams have dried up is emphasized when Lawrence travels to London to enlist help from the underworld for his scheme to steal recently discovered Nazi gold now in the hands of the military. He recruits Stratton (Donald Wolfitt), a retired black marketeer and Brian (Nigel Patrick), an ex-serviceman 'chancer', both of whom cannot resist the thrill of being involved in crime again. As a heist thriller, it follows a conventionally fatal *noir* trajectory that ends with the gang self-destructing under the pressure created by ill luck. As male melodrama, the exegesis of motivation is again the key. Whereas Stratton and Brian are simply in pursuit of money and excitement, Lawrence has a cause. Wracked by self-pity about never having 'cared enough', he intends to use the money to free Maria (Mai Zetterling) from her debt to the lecherous Fischer (Eric Pohlmann) and send the orphans she has befriended to a new life in Brazil. Melodramatically, its contemporary theme is regeneration that on the surface can be addressed by money, but the real 'prize' is romance, without which, the theme song informs us, 'the world would be, a world without chance'.

Rather than criminal-centred gangster or underworld films, the early 1950s is notable for the dramatization of relationships between victims and offenders. This could take many forms, but common were narratives about law-abiding individuals who become criminals, the impact of crime on individuals closely associated with criminals, and people who are victimized by crime. This can be seen in very formulaic genre films, in quite unconventional crime melodramas, and hybrid variations in between. Tempean's *Tiger by the Tail* (1955), for example, attempts to imitate genre fiction so purely that it

conveys very little social commentary or reflection of the reality of crime. It uses typical *noir* stylistic devices such as first person voice-over-narration and flashback. Larry Parks plays John Desmond, an American journalist in London, a victim-hero brought down initially by fate (the 'good' woman was not there when he called her) and subsequently by his obsession with a *femme fatale* that he met in a bar. This encounter passes him from the *noir* world into the conspiratorial space of English detective fiction, of foreign contagion and danger within. A gang of counterfeiters exploiting the 'dollar shortage' tortures him because Desmond has acquired a coded list of all their agents.

However, a more original example of victimization is Muriel Box's and Rank's *Eyewitness* (1956), in which armed robber (Donald Sinden) and his locksmith accomplice (Nigel Stock) raid a cinema and kill the manager. Sinden is thinly drawn as an ambitious professional whose desperation to avoid identification leads to the stalking of the injured eyewitness, Lucy Church (Muriel Pavlow). Rather than an investigation structure, the aftermath of the robbery is organised around the threat to Lucy as she lies in hospital while her husband (Michael Craig) searches for her. The Churches are more deeply drawn than the criminals, particularly in terms of their relationship as a recently married couple, and it is here that the suspense thriller collides with domestic melodrama. The film begins with a row between the newlyweds about the husband's use of hire purchase, a theme underlined by the programme he has been watching on the new television set, in which the presenter discusses a similar case in which a man 'wanted to give his wife all those little extras which he at present can't afford'. The argument leads directly to the wife's victimization when she runs from the house to the crime scene. This linking of burgeoning consumerism with the acquisitiveness of

violent crime is a dramatization of anxieties about a society being put under pressure by expectations of affluence.

Other films are focused not around the random victimization in the thriller, but the more melodramatic impact of crime on individuals who are personally associated with the criminal, or people who have become criminalized. A good example of this kind of crime melodrama is Tempean's *The Frightened Man* (1952). Julius Rosselli (Dermot Walsh) is both a victim of his father's conspiracy (dealing in stolen goods) and an amateur who joins the 'Camden Mob', the source of his father's merchandise. Like *Assassin for Hire*, this is a melodrama of anxieties about social mobility, welfare and merit, where ethnic Italians are using criminal proceeds to promote their place in the social hierarchy. The father (Charles Victor) uses crime to fund his son's education at Oxford University, which, feeling out of place, the son rejects. This corrupt social engineering inevitably ends tragically and morally with the death of the son and the father's realisation of his unwitting part in the tragedy.

This film, and others such as Ken Hughes' films *Confession* (1955) and *The Brain Machine*, indicates the presence not of cheap, formula pictures, but melodramas of postwar unease, conflict and anxiety. *Confession*, for instance, is also a thriller that starts with a flashforward to a confession of murder. It then follows Mike Nelson (Sydney Chaplin), on the run from his criminal partner, as he returns to his family with \$250,000, the proceeds from a robbery in America. Thus, Mike arrives like a refugee from a pulp novel, but into a domestic melodrama. The head of the Nelson (national naval hero) family is a widower confined to a wheelchair. The daughter hovers between the independence of evening classes and potential marriage to her architect boyfriend, the confessee. Mike himself is described by his sister (Audrey Dalton) as a 'restless

person'. At one point, in his attempts to block out his predicament, he drifts drunkenly into a potential sexual encounter with a blonde in a bar. However, she is not the predator of *film noir*, but a thwarted fashion designer, widowed by the Korean War, and with an incisive line on gender inequality: 'You men have it all your own way'.

However, the film's dramatic conceit is wedded more to fatal *noir* thriller than crime melodrama since it plays out questions of loyalty and betrayal between family, colleagues, the Church, the State (the police), and the pessimism of Mike's exclusive concern for himself and the money suggests a truthfulness more generic than cultural.

Melodramas such as *Confession*, *Assassin for Hire*, *The Brain Machine* or *The Sleeping Tiger* are similar in the way that they combine a crime narrative with domestic melodrama and a wider sense of social anxiety. This is particularly expressed through problematic personal relationships. For example, the marriage of psychiatrists Geoffrey (Patrick Barr) and Philippa (Elizabeth Allan) at the beginning of *The Brain Machine* appears to be over because they have no life outside of work. This is just one element of a wider breakdown in society in this film, as referred to earlier. Strains are apparent in the agencies of control since professionals can identify criminals, but middle-class couples that both work seem unable to cope with the burden of their postwar responsibilities.

The Sleeping Tiger, directed by Joseph Losey and starring fellow American Alexis Smith, also features a conjectural intersection of professional criminality and fractured domestic relationships, but Losey and Smith's co-star, Dirk Bogarde, clearly thought they were 'slumming' with such material. Losey thought the source novel a 'lousy cheap story' and Bogarde regarded the finished film as a 'hackneyed little thriller'

(Caute, 1994, pp.121-122).²¹ In the film, Bogarde's robber is being treated by Smith's psychiatrist husband, but the doctor's wife, bored by his lack of attention for her, tries to seduce Bogarde. Marcia Landy describes it as a 'psychological melodrama' in which Smith's 'Americanness' is key: 'She comes to represent the arrogant, repressive, and finally predatory aspects of a society that is gradually coming to resemble American society' (1991, pp.276-277).²² Thus, although there was a significant shift to rather more straightforward law enforcement and investigation thrillers and the heroic individualism of action melodrama, there were also a considerable number of hybrid genre films, combining, for instance, elements of the thriller with domestic melodrama, in which the villainy of professional crime could be used to express less obvious foreign contagions and dangers within.

7.3 Discourses of crime

Few films, in this period, then, are set within the cultural verisimilitude of the core underworld activities of organized crime such as protection, vice and gambling. Instead, the predominant representation of professional crime at this time is property crime, with nearly half of all professional crime films being concerned with burglary, theft, robbery and so on. The typical presentation of crime, therefore, is of unambiguous predatory property criminals, or of the criminal conspiracies employed within the thriller genre. This accounts for the disproportionate presence of films about the threat from forged currency or evil drugs rackets that did not feature significantly amongst contemporary law and order discourses. In fact, apart from the problem of youth crime, there was a

²¹ The film's budget was in fact estimated by Losey at \$300,000 (Caute, 1994, p.121), so not 'cheap' when compared to a £15,000 B film.

²² Raymond Durnat draws a similar conclusion: 'Not only is the thug a social misfit, so is she, even in the fraternity of misfits. The question: 'what shall we do with the delinquent?' becomes 'what shall we do with the respectable?'. Unless both questions are answered, neither can be answered'. (1970, p.250).

general lack of engagement with the contemporaneous discourse about crime problems such as vice racketeering or project crime.

The Blue Lamp, of course, introduced a conservative tone typical of the period through its focus on delinquency, a particular preoccupation of the early fifties. Its starting point was the identification of a crime problem, presented in documentary realist terms through a montage of newspaper headlines that use emotive language such as 'murder in the streets', 'police chases', 'bandits' and 'gunman'. This crisis is then 'explained' with reference to the deviancy of 'restless and ill-adjusted youngsters'. This hysterical scapegoating of rogue elements presented a reactionary right-wing fantasy of social control with the naturalization of the police-underworld community under threat from, according to the narrator, 'a class apart' lacking the normative codes of professionalism.

A similar reactionary fantasy is dramatized in Lewis Gilbert's *Cosh Boy* (1953). The film's release shortly after the Craig-Bentley trial of December 1952 led to local bans and the addition of a palliative foreword and end word (Aldgate, 2000, p.67). The foreword identifies the problem as 'lack of control and early discipline' and justifies its presentation of this controversial subject matter by its contribution to 'stamping out this social evil'. The film's simple, positivist criminological perspective identifies the cause of the cosh boy's crimes as an absent father and suggests that it can be controlled by physical chastisement. The fact that the film elicited a panic about its distribution, despite its advocacy of corporal discipline as a control mechanism, indicates the sensitivity of dramatizing any image of the deviant at that time, no matter how illiberal it might appear.

In between *The Blue Lamp* and *Cosh Boy*, Basil Dearden's *I Believe in You* is also concerned with juvenile delinquency, and although it was made with a more liberal conscience, like *The Blue Lamp*, its fantasy of control was still bourgeois, paternal and benevolent (Chibnall, 1997, pp.145-147). All three films dramatize the involvement of the male delinquent in the drift towards violent property crime through the fetishistic symbolism of phallic power of being armed with a gun. A serious crime problem is presented through the linking of violent disturbance to unregulated sexuality: Diana, in *The Blue Lamp*, and Norma and Rene (both Joan Collins), in *I Believe in You* and *Cosh Boy* respectively. Thus, the regulation of female desire is imagined as part of the films' fantasies of control through the family and agencies of law enforcement. Each film also identifies inadequate parenting or dysfunctional family as a problem.

However, the presence of films such as *The Intruder* show that the tide was not completely reactionary. Although not about male delinquency directly, its melodramatic criminalization of its ex-serviceman victim-hero (Michael Medwin) includes anxiety about dysfunctional parenting. In particular, its criminological position is the reverse of that in *Cosh Boy* because it suggests that corporal punishment is excessive discipline rather than a means of control. Thus, Lowden (Edward Chapman), Medwin's uncle and surrogate father, who believes in beating children to prevent them becoming 'cosh boys', is presented as an old-fashioned and inadequate parent who contributes to his nephew's downfall. However, this is still in the context of a bourgeois benevolent paternalism that promotes duty, self-restraint and social responsibility. Thus, the film's feel-good ending has Medwin responding at the last minute to his former commanding

officer's advice that in return for help afterwards, he should return to prison and finish his sentence.²³

Broadly, two approaches to the dramatization of professional crime and associated law and order discourses can be identified. Firstly, there are those films which vary in the degree of their centrality of criminal activity, and which dramatize relationships between victims and offenders in processes of victimization and criminal transformation. These films tend not to address specific crime problems. They also have more diverse narrative structures of transformation and victimization that are usually less concerned about the discourse of disorder and its control. Secondly, in law enforcement or investigation narratives, conflict between state agencies and offenders are foregrounded. They privilege the subjectivity of the authorities and are often characterized by a reactionary conservative tone, dramatizing a crime problem or threat countered by bureaucratic organization, male heroism and personal motivation. Occasionally, this reactionary tone is raised to the level of a 'war on crime'.

The first approach is seen in *The Lost Hours*, in which disorder is hidden beneath the surface of legitimate business, but without a hint of panic, shock or indignant reaction. The police are largely background figures, stereotypically lightly comic and hard working. This is a film that is about things other than crime, within the sway of its generic verisimilitude: a hero-victim of a murderous smuggling racket, a show-off test pilot examined about his masculinity, rescuing a threatened heroine and overcoming the villain in a reassuring fantasy of masculine action. Similarly, *Tiger by the Tail* has no concerns about the origins or punishment of crime. It is a more a fantasy about

²³ The ex-commanding officer is played by Jack Hawkins, the definitive representative of middle-class professionalism.

unregulated male sexuality than the threat of crime, an American bachelor in search of excitement on his way to Paris, but who finds ironically too much of it in rainy London.

Emblematic of these narratives of victimization that decline to engage in reactionary discourses about disorder is *Escape by Night*, in which a journalist becomes a hostage to a fugitive vice king. The film's milieu is Fleet Street crime reporting, but it is neither a sensational film about the exposure of vice racketeering, nor very discursive about crime or the nature of the criminal. In the film, it is crime that is under pressure from reporters, the police and the courts, and not society under attack from a criminal threat.

Similarly, films about the criminalization of amateurs also tend not to be concerned with fantasies of threat and reaction. *The Frightened Man*, for example, is not anxious about a specific crime problem. The police are rather background figures who have known criminals under surveillance by detectives on 'special duties' rather than undercover operations. Order is a question of routine more than a reaction to danger. Crime is presented as a habitual weakness for money fed by greed, a background against which Julius tries to make a mark by becoming a thief. Likewise, *A Prize of Gold* is not significantly discursive about law and order. It is typically a film not about the maintenance of order, but about the motivations of disorder, a melodrama about male agency and purpose, about these issues will be discussed later in the chapter.

The remaining part of this section is concerned with those films that do address crime problems or issues of law and order, films that privilege the subjectivity of the authorities or that are often characterized by a reactionary conservative tone. The movement towards authority subjectivity is evidenced in the cooperation given by law enforcement institutions to film-makers in films such as *The Blue Lamp*, *Street Corner*,

and *Forbidden Cargo*. The significance of this can be gauged by the fact that not all films received the same degree of cooperation. In fact, in the case of *The Good Die Young*, there was only objection and hindrance in the relationship between the filmmakers and the authorities. This heist film was based on a novel, written by the American Second World War veteran, Richard Macauley, in which a group of ex-servicemen from the same wartime platoon steal a tank to commit a bank robbery. But, in pre-production, the army prohibited the use of a tank, the bank financing the film would not allow a bank to be used (forcing a switch to a Post Office van as a target), and it was not allowed to show police carrying guns.²⁴ Thus, it is clear that this was a period when there was sensitivity to any sensational challenges to authority within the verisimilitude of British culture.

The dramatization of a reactionary fantasy of social order is present in many law enforcement narratives at this time. In *13 East Street*, for instance, the solving of a crime problem involves a dangerous undercover operation of counter measures, and *House of Secrets* blends crime fighting with espionage. The 'war on crime' is particularly prominent in the battle against drug rackets in *Cairo Road*, *Forbidden Cargo* and *Judgment Deferred*. In *Forbidden Cargo*, the mood is one of shocked indignation requiring a vigilant response and anxiety to punish.²⁵ The film projects an image of national vigilance and authority from the very beginning with its montage of Union Jacks on various vessels, suggesting mastery of the sea and island security.

Assassin for Hire and *The Dark Man* also dramatize an anxiety about crime met by the forces of reaction. The Scotland Yard detective, Carson, in *Assassin for Hire*, believes

²⁴ Lewis Gilbert (interview with the author).

²⁵ This surfaces particularly in the performances of the customs police played by Jack Warner and Nigel Patrick as they fiddle restlessly with their sticks.

that criminals do not play by the rules, so 'neither should we'. Driven by the conclusion that 'the ends justify the means', he tricks the hired killer into thinking that he has mistakenly killed his own brother, eliciting a confession. In *The Dark Man*, Scotland Yard's Inspector Viner is even seen firing a gun at the fleeing murderer, who has been cornered by a sweeping operation along the coast using the armed forces in a mass expulsion of the rogue criminal. And this is set against a background of public pressures on policing from the press, committees of local politicians, and the demands of the criminal justice system about the propriety of investigation procedures

Furthermore, the resolution of criminal disruption is often presented in a rather personalized way. This continues a generic trait of films of the late forties, such as *Dancing with Crime* and *Brighton Rock*. Crime is dramatized as a personalized threat to the family, friends, colleagues, and so on, so that there is a close relationship between the victims and the agents of order through their involvement or association with the investigation into or pursuit of criminals. The effect is to create an emotionalism typical of the modes of melodrama or crime reporting, drawing attention to the victim or processes of victimization, and ending in the catharsis of natural justice with the death of the villain.

Of all the films that dramatize professional crime with a reactionary tone in the early fifties, John Baxter's *Judgment Deferred* can be used to provide a particularly apt summary, although the film has many auteuristic elements. This first feature, made for Group 3, where Baxter was a production controller, shows a continuation of Baxter's preoccupation with the depiction of working-class life in his films since the early

1930s.²⁶ The story is sourced from his *Doss House* (1933), but importantly a community centre replaces the cheap lodging-house, and drug peddling replaces murder.

Baxter's concerns for the lives of his 'community' of characters allow even minor ones to have some depth beyond their basic narrative function. This inevitably arrests the flow of the crime plot, as does the inclusion of musical interludes,²⁷ so that it is quite difficult to describe the film succinctly. However, Coxon (Elwyn Brook Jones) is a typical villain, an aristocrat who runs his business from a London club. He is investigated by a reporter, David Kennedy (Hugh Sinclair). Kennedy is trying to find out about an escaped convict who previously had saved his life at Dunkirk, but who in fact has been framed by Coxon. Like in *The Blue Lamp* and *Noose*, a 'community' rises up to expel anti-social elements. Kennedy is aided by a group of postwar 'low-life' - the displaced, a street musician and a flower seller, men who congregate at a community centre and regard the wrongly convicted man as a friend.

The need for a strong sense of justice is the main premise of the film. It begins at the Old Bailey with a false conviction and ends with a kangaroo court set up against Coxon by his assailants. The 'case' is tried by the intellectual, Chancellor (Abraham Sofaer), who recruits the original trial judge by telling him about his belief in justice. A natural justice is obtained when Coxon falls to his death as he attempts to escape judgment. However, the film is also concerned with a wider social justice. The shadow of the war lingers quite forcefully. Whereas *The Blue Lamp* is anxious about crime, and *Noose* is angry and frustrated about the black market, the mood in *Judgment Deferred* is more

²⁶ Group 3 was established in 1951 as part of the state intervention in the film industry of the Group scheme. Between 1952 and 1956 there were twenty-two Group 3 productions, mostly B films (documentary and comedy), but only two crime films. Robert Baker of Tempean Films describes Group 3 productions as being 'a little arty-farty' (McFarlane, 1997, p.46).

²⁷ Such as those performed by Bud Flanagan, appearing as himself.

melancholic, sentimental and retrospective. Kennedy feels a sense of responsibility for his saviour at Dunkirk, as do the other men for each other, including other victims of war such as widowers and refugees. The 'commune' of displaced men gather at the community centre created in the crypt of a church destroyed during the Blitz. The threat to society by drugs is presented as severe and constantly underlined, as if it is a new enemy faced by the people. The judge describes the peddling of narcotics as a 'vice with no redeeming feature'. Kennedy views Coxon's racket as 'the cruellest in the country, and the best organized'. When Chancellor refers to drug users as 'maimed and shattered victims', he is using the language that might equally apply to the sufferers of war.

7.4 Discourses of masculinity

As referred to earlier, it has been suggested that the fifties war film offered an extreme version of masculinity and reassurance about male roles outside of the domestic context of home and family (Geraghty, 2000). The genre is seen as providing a reassuring sanctuary in which effective resolutions to male anxieties are reproduced. In relation to the dramatization of professional crime, both 'reassuring' and 'troubling' performances of masculinity characterize the crime film in the early fifties. Law enforcement narratives were routine vehicles for the reinforcement of paternal competence, whereas the thematic of the crime melodrama was occasionally the site of patriarchal anxieties or instabilities of gender relations.

In the law enforcement films, the function of crime was to pose a threat that could be reacted against, as part of the thriller genre and the melodramatic mode. That response was most often met by heroic individualism, rather than by leadership in the context of the male group, as was typical in the war film. Films that emphasize communal action,

such as *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner*, are unusual. *The Blue Lamp* campaigns for renewal by having the recruit replacing the community role of the dead 'father'. In *Street Corner*, there is a responsive maternal collective effort, though not without individual acts of heroism, such as the rescue of the Dawson baby from the window ledge. However, more commonly, the representatives of order are the mid-ranking officers in charge of investigations, the middle-aged, middle-class men cast in the image of their creators. They are typically experienced, capable father figures, presenting an image of restrained and responsible masculine authority that does not need exposition.

Harper (2000) has already noted this characteristic in relation to the masculine dominated cinema of Ealing in the 1950s, with films such as *The Long Arm*, in which the police 'man's body is the social institution' (p.91). Jack Hawkins' Superintendent Halliday, as the investigating officer, has to react to the serious threat of serial burglary and murder, and he does so as a powerfully symbolic and real father, since, unlike the fifties war film, the domestic context of home is not absent. His experience assists the routine professionalism of his occupation, but an individual act of courage (throwing himself, truncheon akimbo, onto the bonnet of the speeding getaway car) proves that the 'father' has physical as well as mental mastery.

This exercise of fatherly discipline and control is often repeated in the figure of the heroic public servant, whose authority is often de-sexualized even when he is romantically involved. Edward Underdown's Inspector Viner in *The Dark Man*, for instance, has a romance with the witness he is also protecting, but his performance is very restrained so that emotions are kept under the surface. His police work largely consists of routine interviews and surveillance, although there is a physical finale in

which he overcomes the villain and is wounded. Similarly, Nigel Patrick's Inspector Kenyon in *Forbidden Cargo* is the representative of law enforcement played with cool detachment and middle-class authority, only needing to use physical force to overcome the hidden villain. This idealized figure was even transposed to foreign settings, such as in *Cairo Road*, as performed by dour tyke Eric Portman. These roles of middle-class authority, typically performed by actors in their forties²⁸, though often appearing older through the restraint of their performance, presented an image of masculinity that was distinctly paternal.

This is further underlined by the way that the 'cadet-father' trope of the fifties identified by Durgnat (1970, p.142) is taken up in the crime film. In the war film, it functions to channel the rebellion and enthusiasm of the young hero (Geraghty, 2000, p.193), but in law enforcement films, although there is an element of initiating the young officer into the ways of the experienced man, it is much more about confirming the superiority of the paternal figure than the management of rebelliousness in the male group.²⁹ Halliday, in *The Long Arm*, however, is a triumphant patriarch who leads by example, showing his younger sergeant the sacrifices of the position. Likewise, Bey in *Cairo Road* exposes his junior officer to the reality of crime, and although the 'cadet' redeems an earlier mistake by an act of heroism, the film ends with the 'father' at his desk at the beginning of a new case.

The other type of hero in law enforcement narratives is similarly matched by the maturity of the leading man, but played by North American actors as a consequence of

²⁸ Nigel Patrick was born in 1914, Jack Hawkins in 1910, Edward Underdown in 1908 and Eric Portman in 1903.

²⁹ In this context, *The Intruder* is an interesting hybrid of the war and crime film and it does deal with the containment of rebelliousness in its flashbacks to the war. *The Blue Lamp* is a contradictory variation since the recruit does replace the veteran, but this is in response to a specific law and order crisis.

the internationalism of the market for British crime films. However, in other respects, this allowed the expression of quite alternative masculine performances. This is well illustrated by *The Diamond*, an independent A film made for United Artists, since it is particularly discursive about the contrast between American and British policemen. In this murder thriller, which is part police procedural and part detective film, there are two heroes who lead the investigation and counter the criminal conspiracy. Joe Dennison (Dennis O'Keefe) is an American Treasury Special Investigator, whilst Philip Friend plays Special Branch Inspector Hector McClaren. Their different personae are not just expressions of national identity but also about policing. They are drawn as opposites. Thus, for instance, whereas Dennison is trying to give up smoking by chewing gum, and has a confident, outgoing, predatory approach to women, McClaren is a pipe smoking Scot with a reserved personality who treats Dennison's ex-girlfriend, Marline Miller (Margaret Sheridan), with gentlemanly respect. Dennison is individualistic and carries a gun, whereas McClaren has to operate within Scotland Yard procedures. At first, McLaren seems to be favoured, since Marline uses him to avoid Dennison's attention. However, in the end, it is Dennison's skills that prove to be the most decisive when he rescues McClaren from the villain's gang. This is confirmed when Dennison recovers his full potency in the final moments of the film when Marline lights his cigarette, signalling the end of his emasculatory battle with smoking.

At work here, but more typically in the B crime film, is the mixing of British and American cultural and generic verisimilitudes, producing 'transatlanticism' with a privileging of Hollywood heroism. In *The Galignite Gang*, for example, the hero is Baxter (Wayne Morris), the American half of Anglo American Investigations Inc. Baxter is very much the confident and competent private detective who volunteers to

‘handle the tough stuff’. His British partner, the less charismatic and assured Rutherford (Patrick Holt), is actually the hidden villain, the master criminal of thriller fiction who kidnaps the platinum blonde heroine.

Similar structures can also be found in non-law enforcement films such as *The Lost Hours*. The mystery in this murder thriller is created by speculation about what happened in the ‘lost hours’ when Paul Smith (Mark Stevens), a ‘Yank’ attending an RAF squadron reunion, is drugged and framed by an unseen assailant. The hero is a test pilot, but he takes on the guise of the private detective to clear his name. He physically overpowers the real murderer, revealed as his rival suitor (John Bentley) for the threatened heroine, Louise Parker (Jean Kent). Once again, crime functions to pose a threat, setting a test that allows the American hero to achieve a successful performance of masculine agency, unencumbered from the paternalistic imperative of the representation of masculinity on behalf of British social institutions such as the police.

The hybridity of ‘transatlanticism’ or a wider internationalism produced some interesting masquerades of masculine performance whenever British actors played American heroes, or where British leading men adopted the tougher or more active persona of the Hollywood hero. For example, in *13 East Street* Patrick Holt’s ‘undercover cop’ role mixes American tough guy disguise with Scotland Yard understatement. The effect of this mongrel moviemaking was to produce images of masculinity that were less in thrall of steadfast paternalism and the English class system. Other examples include Richard Greene’s American Treasury Agent in *Contraband*

Spain, or Michael Craig in *House of Secrets*, who was given his first leading role as an embryonic 'James Bond'.³⁰

Broadly, then, in crime films at this time, there were two prominent forms of masculine heroism enacted in response to the dramatization of the threat of professional crime. First, there was a paternalistic representation of the social institution of law enforcement, with a privileging of middle-class authority, and middle-aged conservatism. Popular masculinity in this period is rightly seen to represent a 'caring and heroic professionalism which passed itself off as universal' (Spicer, 1997, p.152). Second, though, there was the not insignificant, more modernizing and less class-bound testing of male agency and worth, typical of the transatlanticism and internationalism of the B crime film. This did constitute a not inconsiderable alternative to the resolute, patriarchal meritocracy of the most popular British films at this time. However, this did not extend to the representation of more radical or subversive masculinities. No indigenous anti-heroism, for instance, of working-class toughness, posed a significant challenge to these dominant masculinities until the late fifties (Spicer, 1999).

Nevertheless, this was also a period in which the gender anxieties and instabilities represented in films of the late forties continued to surface in the crime melodrama. In particular, the contrasting of a satisfying masculine performance in wartime with an unsatisfactory postwar experience of peace and growing prosperity extended to the crime films of the early fifties, for example, in dramas about ex-servicemen who become involved with professional crime. More generally, male melodramas also referenced a wider social context in which gender relationships are affected by financial

³⁰ Craig himself later described *House of Secrets* as 'a sort of James Bond thing', 'with various leading ladies, love scenes and fights, and all that idiot stuff' (McFarlane, 1997, p.144).

arrangements, consumerism, materialism, and the symbolic power attached to challenges to the legitimacy of patriarchy.

Far from merely being a feature of a temporary period of postwar adjustment, the theme of corrupted servicemen continued into the 1950s. It became an ideal vehicle to express filmmakers's sense of disappointment, loss and betrayal amidst increasing comfort and affluence. Disbanded wartime outfits were resurrected as criminal gangs in Basil Dearden's *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955), in which an ex-wartime motor boat crew begin to use their old ship for smuggling, and in *The Good Die Young* another group of men, a clerk, Joe (Richard Basehart), an airman, Eddie (John Ireland), a boxer, Mike (Stanley Baker) and a 'gentleman of leisure', Rave (Laurence Harvey), come together to commit a robbery. Their empathy for one another, as a disparate group of strangers who meet in the pub, is possible because they are all war veterans experiencing a loss of role. As Joe remarks, they are all 'chartered members of the lame dog club'. Crucially, this 'disability' is largely represented by problematic financial and emotional relationships with women. Joe needs money to take his pregnant wife back to America. Mike has been forced to quit boxing because of an injury that led to an amputated hand, but his wife has squandered his nest egg of £1,000. Eddie's actress wife deserts him for her latest co-star. Rave's role is one reversed in relation to the patriarchal norm. He is a 'kept man', relying on handouts from his aristocratic father and a rich wife who ceases to support his gambling debts. These problematic relationships constitute the motivational circumstances that lead the men to commit crime.

Similarly, Ginger Edwards (Michael Medwin), a former tank trooper, in *The Intruder*, is denied a successful readjustment to peacetime life by a chain of unfortunate circumstances that reduces him to a desperate fugitive. His troubles start from the moment he returns home to find that his girlfriend had not waited for him and had taken up with a civilian exempted from service for 'flat feet'. Melodramatically, moral polarities are employed in the characterization of women who help or hinder the hero's progress. For example, 'Good' and 'bad' women are crucial to Bankley's readjustment to postwar society in *Soho Incident*. He is assisted into crime by one woman, but helped out of it by the love of another. Gambling racketeer Rico Francesi (Martin Benson), takes on ex-servicemen Bankley largely because his sister, Bella (Faith Domergue), is attracted to him. Her transgressive femininity resides in her desire to control Jim. He is attracted to her, but she wants to dominate their relationship by buying him clothes and being the seducer, not the seduced. Supported by Bella, Jim rises in the gang, but once he realises the violent nature of the criminals, and especially of Bella herself, he tries to leave. This is something she cannot tolerate. 'Nobody leaves me', she rails at him. 'I walk out when I'm ready. And you don't go until I tell you to'. Jim is a man manipulated by a money-conscious, controlling woman, whereas 'good' woman Betty Walker (Rona Anderson), offers love and middle-class restraint, rather than lust and showy materialism.

However, not every ex-serviceman's postwar crisis is presented as a breakdown in relationships with women. *The Ship That Died of Shame*, for instance, genders the moral force for good as feminine. The motor boat "1087" is regarded as being female and, although it is a machine, it ('she') exercises a moral conscience on behalf of the men who are using 'her' for crime, by, for instance, failing 'her' engines. Moreover,

Helen (Virginia McKenna), the wife of the film's hero, Bill Randall (George Baker), functions as his moral purpose for fighting the war (O'Sullivan, 1997, p.179). In many crime films, women are presented as one of the causes of male disillusionment with postwar culture, whereas in *The Ship That Died of Shame* they signify wartime moral virtues that have been lost or are under threat in peacetime.

The problems for the officer-class heroes such as Randall in *The Ship That Died of Shame*, is that they are experiencing a loss of the power that they possessed in wartime. Randall fails in business and is unable to get his old prewar job back. Wartime camaraderie and officer-class authority is restored through crime, although the conventional morality of the time means that these illegal solutions end in failure. Randall's 'rebirth' as a smuggler of postwar luxuries degenerates, without his knowledge, into providing an escape route for a child murderer. This fall can be taken as a cruel metaphor for the decline of postwar Britain itself. Randall and the ship's 'conscience' combine to end this sordid conspiracy and the final flashback images of the film remind us of postwar loss as the motor boat is shown speeding across the waves at the height of its wartime glory.

In post-black marketeering Britain, then, ex-servicemen were shown to be still vulnerable to the machinations of dangerous foreign criminals and materialistic spider women. However, masculine anxieties were not confined to ex-servicemen. Professional criminals and assorted amateurs who become criminalized were also shown to be experiencing 'female trouble'. Men and women were often inextricably linked in a nexus of criminal motivations in a number of films that symbolize men's attempts to deal with the changing status of women. It is significant, for instance, that Shakespearean tragedy was remade in this period as a gangster melodrama. In *Joe*

Macbeth, Paul Douglas is the eponymous gunman who gets promoted to second in command. This fails to satisfy his wife, Lily (Ruth Roman), who wants more than the nice house and money that Joe's crimes have already provided. Her demands, therefore, go beyond conventional materialism, to the exercise of power through her dominated husband. She pushes him into killing the boss and taking his place at the head of the mob. Lily's scheming villainy is more heinous than Joe's profession of violence, since it leads to the destruction of the male world of the gang. This destructive reversal of traditional power structures is wonderfully captured in a contemporary advertisement, which shows a large close-up of the face of wide-eyed Joe looking up at a castratingly terrifying full-length image of Lily in slacks. The copy asks rhetorically, 'who wore the trousers and who did the KILLINGS..?'.³¹

Blame, though, was not always attached to women implicated in men's entry into professional crime. In *The Frightened Man*, for example, Julius (Dermot Walsh) commits crime in a desire to please a woman, but he is experiencing a confusion of role more than a crisis directly attributable to the fault of women. His incentive is that he has found a woman, Amanda (Barbara Murray), to marry. 'You're going to be proud of me Amanda', he explains. 'I'm going to make money. I'm going to make it fast'. His death 'reveals', in melodramatic terms, that everything has gone wrong because relationships have been reduced to financial transactions. During one conversation, Julius reassures Amanda that money is important because 'it gets you everything you want'. Unconvinced, Amanda responds by saying 'Except love'.

Thus, the crime film, as well as providing an outlet for the successful achievement of masculine agency in various forms of heroic action melodrama, could also be the site of

³¹ The advert appeared in *Kinematograph Weekly*, 27th October 1955.

uncertainty and dissatisfaction about male identity. George Baker, when asked to reflect upon his appearance in films such as *The Intruder* and *The Ship That Died of Shame*, and whether or not they seemed to offer a critique of postwar England, concluded that there were ‘an awful lot of people wandering about who were unable to find their place again’ (McFarlane, 1997, p.38). Consider Joe Lawrence, for instance, in *A Prize of Gold*, although he is an American in an international setting, he was the creation of the British adventure novelist Max Catto. Lawrence is characterized as someone who has everything that he could want in postwar Berlin – a serviceman with a certain amount of freedom to bend rules and enhance his bachelor lifestyle. But he is placed in a collision with an ‘angel’ of a woman for whom he is willing to make sacrifices. He is *in* service, but not providing *a* service. The robbery is a way of giving his life greater significance, ‘to care enough’, to have cause. This is a very different kind of paternalism to that ascribed to Jack Hawkins as part of the patriarchal institution. This is a form of romantic humanitarianism in which the ‘father’ tries to rescue the lost children of postwar dislocation.

As well as being a means of expressing uneasiness about male worth and agency, the dramatization of professional crime was also a context for the continuing use of the underworld as a focus for the corruption of gender and wider social relations and its attendant disciplinary mechanisms. It is not just that films such as Basil Dearden’s *Pool of London* dramatize individualism thwarted and contained by social responsibility (Barr, 1980, p.117; Higson, 1997, p169), but that there is a reactionary confidence about gender identity and the importance of regulation through the family. The anxiety about unrestrained female sexuality seen in films such as *Good Time Girl*, continues in *The Blue Lamp* where Diana Lewis’ criminality is explained in terms of her dysfunctional

family, whereas Tom Riley appears inherently evil (Chibnall, 1997, p.141). Similarly, in *Street Corner*, all one is given is that Ray is a thief, but in contrast one is offered much more about Bridget Foster's background in a marriage-of-convenience with an interfering mother-in-law, that causes her to abandon her child in favour of the criminal's perverse materialism.

In *Judgment Deferred*, Lil Carter (Joan Collins) is presented as another wayward woman in need of correction. She has to be re-educated to reject the money that has paid for foreign holidays courtesy of Coxon and his 'evil drugs racket'. The middle-class couple, the reporter Kennedy and his wife Kay (Helen Shingler) provide moral authority and leadership. Kay, for instance, regards herself as one of the lucky ones who has happiness rather than money.

However, this period is not without alternatives to the middle-class, liberal social conservatism that was being peddled by Dearden-Relf and Ealing. For example, Irene's criminality, in *Once a Sinner*, is typically explained with reference to inappropriate parenting, but this low life melodrama is built around gender problematics that de-stabilize the basis of middle-class family life as a suitable locus of correction.³² When John Ross (Jack Watling) rejects his fiancée Vera (Joy Shelton), he is avoiding the reproduction of the emasculatory influence of his mother in his father's house. However, when he marries Irene (Pat Kirkwood), conflict is created by her lack of domesticity and her ease in the public sphere of work, leisure and crime, so that both constructions of class-based femininity are doubtful foundations for effective patriarchy.

³² At the time, the film was seen as offering 'the industrial ninepennies quite a substantial dish' (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 July 1950, p.34), and was the kind of material, according to Lewis Gilbert, that tended to go down better with Northern audiences (interview with the author).

Assassin for Hire also differs from films such as *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner* in terms of its attitudes towards the family and gender, although crime is again represented as a perverse form of individualism, albeit from a very different perspective. Using an independent woman to embody the ideal, this film dramatizes the desirability of individualistic behaviour. Helen (June Rodney) is an actress who advises her boyfriend, Seppe (John Hower) that he must not be bought success, that he should 'work for it, earn it', whereas Seppe's criminal brother, Tony (Sydney Tafler) advocates taking 'what's offered in this world when you can get it'. In *The Blue Lamp* and *Street Corner*, the individualism of crime is presented as a threat to the communal structures of society by showing a breakdown in responsibility and restraint, particularly in the case of unregulated female sexuality vulnerable to the heightened potency of criminal men. However, whereas these films dramatize anxiety about the weakening of community and social cohesion, *Assassin for Hire* dramatizes unease about the collective rights of welfare, the social family, as it challenges meritocracy. Melodramatically, this unusual underworld story uses the crime film to promote the modernizing of gender and familial relations within the nostalgia of the puritanical work ethic.

As the decade unfolded, this modernizing attitude was characterized by a more relaxed representation of gender relations. *Portrait of Alison*, for instance, is more concerned about deflating upper-class pretensions than the instabilities of female sexuality. Its hidden villain is a 'toff', whose 'purchase' of a fiancée attracted to his wealth seems old-fashioned compared to the hero's more bohemian, bachelor lifestyle, in the cultural milieu of commercial art and international travel, and presented without any sense of decadence or the disciplinary pressures of earlier films.

However, the need for discipline applied to both men and women was a residual trope throughout this period. In *The Gelignite Gang*, for example, there is anxiety about Chapman (James Kenney), a wayward youth with a dead mother and an absent father, who pawns his employer's stock and offers information to the thieves to finance his gambling and his love life. In *The Long Arm*, the real instability is not the burglar, but his wife, Mrs Elliott (Ursula Howells), the cold hearted and materialistic beneficiary of her husband's crimes. And the threat of materialism to family life is at the core of *Dangerous Cargo*, a melodrama of moral contrast in which two ex-POWs are dramatized as taking different paths after the war. A former comrade introduces the security guard hero (Jack Watling) to the vice of gambling in order to place him in the debt of the criminal gang, drawing attention to a lack of self-restraint towards materialism that threatens the family unit.

There were, though, few crime films that were overtly concerned with anxieties about consumerism or the feminization of society by advertising mass culture. In this respect, *Eyewitness* is a fascinating and key exception from the untypical perspective of a female writer and director that avoids a culture of blame, while still stressing the undesirability of individualistic behaviour and the importance of self-restraint. Its professional thief is a self-centred devil figure who makes a deadly intrusion into the suburban community represented by newly weds Lucy and Jay. In the key opening scene, the social problem is identified not as consumerism itself, but its symptom, debt. Lucy scolds her husband because he has bought a television on hire purchase against what they had agreed. From Lucy's point of view, Jay needs 'bringing to his senses', and this is accomplished by the shock of her victimization at the robbery scene.

The tensions dramatized in this film are not only with the consumer society, but also with the companionate marriage. When Lucy storms out of the marital home, Jay goes to the pub and the British Legion, an experience he has abandoned as a married man in favour of drinking bottled beer at home, a more feminine space. At the social club, he meets an old friend who uses it as a means of escaping his nagging wife and mother-in-law. Marriage is thus presented as a site of gender conflict, a relationship lacking consultation, co-operation and understanding. Professional crime is used to amplify the politics of self-interest (in the adherence to materialism) so that they can be demonised and destroyed. The married couple are doubled in the underworld by Sinden and his partner, played by Nigel Stock, a locksmith and nervous first-timer unaware of his associate's violent tendencies. Stock strangles the monstrous Sinden who represents the unfettered desires of individualism and obstruction to equitable partnership. In straight society, the newlyweds are reunited when Lucy asks Jay to 'Take me home'. The ultimate anxiety dramatized in this film is the fear of uncontrolled satisfaction of needs that threatens the home as a social microcosm, a 'dangerous cargo' indeed.

7.5 Summary

The current critical conception of British cinema in this period constructs it as a time of stultifying conformity characterized by anodyne, safe and stable genre production of popular comedies, war and adventure films. In relation to the crime film, this view can generally be supported, although the degree of conformity and stability is overstated given the growth of independent production and the market for the B crime film, and because it is a genre that is not without diversity. Equally, it can be seen that the dramatization of professional crime in the first half of the 1950s hardly constitutes a

significant challenge or resistance to traditional social hierarchies or aesthetic conventions. It did, however, become a more hybridly 'transatlantic' form at the bargain basement end of British film production. More than one-in-three professional crime films at this time were cast with leading North American or Hollywood-based actors. This provided a not insignificant alternative image of masculinity and femininity within 'British' films that was not tethered via the class identities of the performers to the traditional hierarchy of British society, and an image that could be embraced by anyone disaffected with British culture.³³

Unlike the late 1940s, professional criminals or an underworld milieu rarely provided a central focus for film-making at this time. If the titillating and sensational tone of the Sunday papers had its filmic equivalent, it was in relation to juvenile delinquency, the key moral panic of the period. Instead, there was the predominant representation of unambiguous property criminals rather than the more equivocal gangster or spiv villain. Broadly, there are two ways in which professional crime was dramatized at this time: law enforcement films from authoritarian, and frequently reactionary, perspectives and other films that did not always address specific crime problems, or were more concerned with issues other than those that addressed the discourse of disorder and control.

At the beginning of the period, *The Blue Lamp* is indicative of a significant shift towards the representation of the agents of control, but it does not start a coherent police cycle. Typically, it is the professionals of the investigating officer-class as part of the modernizing state machinery that are featured more than a police community. Within

³³ For instance, a popular strategy for some Englishmen drawn to images of American masculinity was to become phoney Americans by copying dress and accents. They were known as 'mock martins' (rhyming slang: Martin's Bank = Yank) (Chibnall, 1996).

the generic verisimilitude of the thriller, there is less melodramatic police folk heroism. Traditional hierarchies are mirrored in the presentation of the criminal, though criminal gangs were more marginalized than in comedy crime films such as *The Ladykillers*. However, it is more usual to find the privileging of a middle-class world-view, for example, in the unmasking of upper-class hidden villains through the construction of crime as danger within or foreign contagion.

To a large extent, there is a similar gender conformity. In the very early fifties in particular, there is a concern to regulate female desire within functional families as part of the fantasy of crime control, but more generally it is a period in which crime films advocate self-restraint and responsibility through the role models of benevolent paternalism, the middle-aged, middle-class figures of authority, fatherly control and discipline. However, again, there are the alternative masculine performances of North American characters and the masquerades of British actors as international law enforcers. Generally, the crime film could demonstrate both a relaxed and a more anxious gender conformity, but there are two main forms of masculine heroism: the paternalistic representation of the social institution in the figure of the law enforcement agent, and a more modernizing, less class-bound testing of male agency and worth in the action melodrama.

Unlike the war film, which took masculine behaviour as its theme, providing a 'site of security' (Geraghty, 2000), the crime film in the early 1950s is a much more hybrid and diverse genre, making it difficult to generalize. In comparison to the war film, also, the crime film is seldom about the male group, and typically about the individual male, not removed from the domestic context, but situated in reference to themes of work and

home, women and money. Crime melodramas about victims and offenders dramatize anxieties that are not always to do with crime at all. Although there are not many direct or overt references to the consumer society and the feminization of 'admass' culture, indirectly the crime film dramatizes through narratives of criminalization and victimization the instabilities of postwar gender identities related to the legacy of the war and the modernism and conservatism of social change during a period of enforced consensus and reactionary sensitivity to non-conformity.

CHAPTER 8

THE DRAMATIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL CRIME IN BRITISH FILM 1957-1965

8.1 Institutional, critical and social context

It is suggested that the period after 1955 was an irrational one for the British film industry since audiences were declining, but production was increasing (Stafford, 2001, p.97).¹ There was a small proportionate decline in the crime film and the representation of professional crime compared to 1950-1956, but the second feature as the predominant place for the dramatization of professional crime was consolidated and extended.² At this time, of the 152 professional crime dramas, seventy-nine (fifty-three percent) have running times of less than seventy minutes, twice as high as during the early to mid-fifties. Apart from a handful of Rank productions, the majors produced directly very few of these crime films. The centre of power in the British market still lay with the distribution and exhibition duopoly, whilst the less profitable and riskier business of film production was devolved from the majors to independent producers (Hill, 1986, p.39). Representation of professional crime in this period was dominated by the shortest B film, but there was also a revival of interest in professional crime in the A film, notably for police films and this is addressed in the genre section.

¹ Admissions decreased by fifty-one percent 1955-1959 and by thirty-two percent in the next five years (Docherty et al, 1987, p.2), but production rose from an average of about 100 films per year during 1950-1956, to around 116 between 1957 and 1965.

² The proportion of crime films dropped a little from thirty-eight to thirty-four percent, as did that of professional crime features, down from forty-eight to forty-three percent of all crime films in relation to 1950-1956.

New companies, such as Allied Film Makers and Bryanston, set up by producers, directors and actors, marked a shift away from the control of the major studio executives towards a more personal input, but still subject to the wider control of the duopoly (Hill, 1986, p.41). This produced a number of independent A films about professional crime, including two films about the persistent theme of the criminalization of ex-servicemen (*The League of Gentlemen* and *A Prize of Arms* [1962]). However, most of the dramatizations of professional criminality in this period originated once again from a small number of companies and producers who specialized in crime programmers. For example, Merton Park, Butcher's and Danziger were responsible for about a third of the field of the present study. If the films of the Luckwells, Guido Coen, Blakeley's and Independent Artists are added, then the proportion rises to just over a half. But the institutional organization in both sectors created a context in which a new creativity was possible, evidenced in the greater diversity and hybridity of crime genre production at this time.

This was a period of continuity and closure. The themes and issues of the early and mid-1950s persisted into the early 60s (Geraghty, 2000, p.xiv), but some practices ended. For example, the 'transatlanticism' of imported American actors in British crime films ended at the beginning of the sixties (Murphy, 1992, p.212). The precise moment was around 1960-1961. Between 1957 and 1959, around a half of all professional crime dramas were made with North American leads, whereas in 1960 this had fallen to less than a third, and to only a handful per year thereafter, but persisting in A films to the present day.³ This allowed British actors, such as Derren Nesbitt in *Strongroom* and *The*

³ For instance, Yul Brynner in *The File of the Golden Goose* (1968), John Wayne in *Brannigan* (1975), *Loophole* (1981) with Martin Sheen, Harvey Keitel in *The Young Americans* (1993), and *51st State* (2001) starring Samuel L. Jackson.

Informers, the opportunity to develop indigenous 'tough' personae through repeated roles (p.212). In terms of British male stars, the switch between the fifties and the sixties from Jack Hawkins to Stanley Baker as the key actor in the crime film (Murphy, 1992, p.205) was a resonant displacement of the middle-class meritocrat, as Baker made the transition from villain to working-class tough guy hero in Cy Endfield's *Hell Drivers* (1957) (Spicer, 1999, p.85). This had significant impact upon the range of masculinities that were present in professional crime films.

Above all, however, this was a period of change. John Trevelyan's appointment as Secretary of the BBFC in 1957, for example, brought a more liberal censorship regime (Robertson, 1999, p.82), and contributed to a temporary preoccupation with sex. The BBFC had conceded the principle of the possibility of depicting British gangland by the late 1940s, and thereafter 'concentrated upon controlling the genre's depiction of sex and violence' (Robertson, 1999, p.25). For example, some cuts were made to *The Shakedown* (1960) for nudity, and for violence to *The Criminal* (p.22). The introduction of the 'X' certificate in 1951 had provided the opportunity for the censors to sanction adults-only films, but this did not discourage deletions. Fewer films were banned, but cutting was endemic (Matthews, 1994, p.126). *The Shakedown* and *The Criminal* were amongst a small number of X films featuring professional crime that were released from 1957 onwards, coinciding with John Trevelyan's appointment. Only twelve films (four percent) in the field of study in the period between 1951 and 1965 were given X certificates, and mostly because of their sexual content (Table 13). The economics of B crime film production probably meant that most second or co-features had to have more universal appeal, but the sudden increase in the number of films regarded as being only

suitable for adult audiences suggests that there were new trends in and treatments of subject matter.

TABLE 13
FILMS IN THE FIELD OF STUDY WITH ‘X’ CERTIFICATES 1951-1965

<i>The Yellow Balloon</i> (1952)
<i>Cosh Boy</i> (1953)
<i>The Flesh is Weak</i> (1957)
<i>Passport to Shame</i> (1959)
<i>Too Young to Love</i> (1959)
<i>The Shakedown</i> (1960)
<i>Never Let Go</i> (1960)
<i>The Criminal</i> (1960)
<i>Too Hot to Handle</i> (1960)
<i>The Small World of Sammy Lee</i> (1963)
<i>The Informers</i> (1963)

Part of this shift in the approach to crime films was that they ‘presented a less comfortable view of the underworld and a less flattering one of the police’ (Murphy, 1992, p.202) and depicted actual changes in the contemporary underworld that support the crime genre’s claim at this time to social realism (Chibnall, 1999, p.98). What emerges in Murphy (1992) and Chibnall (1999) about the crime film in this period is the expression of a taste culture for aesthetic-ideological qualities, such as realism. Thus, for instance, B films that have been seen as critically disreputable are not without their attractions, such as some of Merton Park’s hour-long adaptations of Edgar Wallace

thrillers that are ‘gripping’ and ‘powerful’, and ‘made with brusque realism’ (Murphy, 1992, p.214). Chibnall’s unravelling and codifying of the crime film between 1959 and 1963 in response to the omission of the genre from the British New Wave (Hill, 1986) produces a tripartite hierarchy. Firstly, there are films that are aesthetically disappointing and lack references to the contemporaneity of crime, such as Butcher’s *Gaolbreak* (1962) and *Impact* (1963). Next, there are examples, such as Coenda’s *Naked Fury* and Independent Artists’ *The Man in the Back Seat* (1961) that show evidence of creativity and style, but with perfunctory representation of the reality of the underworld. Lastly, and of most interest, are films such as *Offbeat* (1961) or *The Frightened City* (1961) that do make reference to contemporary changes in underworld organization. They are regarded as modernizing and transitional in their representations of masculinity and criminality, legal and illegal business culture, and show evidence of anxieties about cultural vulnerability, commercial reorganization and moral deviation (Chibnall, 1999, p.108).

This is very revealing about a particular taste culture that values British crime cinema because of the ability of specific texts to fulfil certain criteria of interest, aesthetic pleasure and social relevance. This is a perfectly valid approach to the appreciation and interpretation of historical texts, but this is primarily because it is telling us what is valuable and interesting about the films *now*, as much as *then*. Thus, at the present time, what seems to matter in terms of aesthetic pleasure and ideological significance about British crime cinema between 1946 and 1965 is the style and cultural verisimilitude of more criminal-centred films, such as in the New Wave realism of the late fifties and early sixties (Murphy, 1992, Chibnall, 1999), and the ‘riff-raff realism’ of the spiv cycle of the late forties (Murphy, 1989; Wollen, 1998). In between, lies the less engaging,

stifling conservatism of the repetitive and formulaic fifties crime cinema (Chibnall, 1999, p.95).

In relation to this critical context, there is a need to be reflexively aware of the subjective construction of difference and how meaning is constantly in process. For instance, it might be that the conception of fifties British cinema as a dull decade is as much a construction of current critical reaction as a real experience at the time, and one that by concentrating on specific or groups of texts loses sight of their place within 'a commercially successful popular film industry' (Stafford, 2001, p.110). The way forward is to acknowledge the taste culture and attempt to map it on to the patterns of film texts that were produced at the time, in terms of quantity as well as quality, in the context of genre and discourses of crime and masculinity, without ignoring the importance of films that might be considered aesthetically uninteresting and lacking cultural verisimilitude. For instance, how typical or representative were the most 'realistic' films, the most aesthetically engaging films compared to those that seem formulaic or socially unaware, and what is significant about the more conventional films other than their 'blandness'? This will be addressed particularly in relation to genre, but also with reference to representational discourses.

Like the film industry itself, this was also a transitional period for society as a whole, bounded in 1965 not by the death of the black and white crime film, but Britain's wartime leader, Winston Churchill. In particular, the late fifties was characterized by more visible challenges to the postwar consensus, a long era coming to an end (Marwick, 1990), an era of self-doubt (Morgan, 1990). Marwick identifies key themes such as affluence, science, and consumerism in the creation of a 'cultural revolution'

evidenced by the intellectualism of CND and satire, the 'liveliness' of the New Wave and pop art, and the centrality of pop music as an outpouring of working-class youth culture (1990, 117-140). Morgan sees the key break as being between 1961 and 1964, after the 'zenith of one-nation Toryism', when there is a break up of the social balance of the fifties with critiques of social structures and relations and a 'culture in dissolution', illustrated by tensions about immigration, in the urge towards modernization (1990, pp.197-237).

Anxieties and 'moral panics' about such things as divorce, juvenile delinquency, homosexuality and prostitution, indicated more general concerns about the impact of social change on family life and moral health. Doubts about the outward signs of social change led to contradictory legislative and cultural responses that were conservatively defensive, but liberalizing. The 'Angry Young Man' movement, for example, asserted working-class perspectives, but its contempt for women as symbols of the superficiality and materialism of contemporary society meant that their anger was 'more conservative than is generally acknowledged' (Hill, 1986, p.22). These social tensions and anxieties have particular resonance because they emerge symptomatically in professional crime films.

The cultural contradictions of nostalgia and radical discontent, it is suggested, were drawn into the crime genre by parallel transformations in criminality and policing (Chibnall, 1999, p.97). In 1962 there was a Royal Commission report on policing that was a sign of changing attitudes to the police. As an institutional figure, the policeman had begun to look old fashioned and not as glamorous as criminals (Chibnall, 1977, p.69). There was a new scepticism and questioning of institutions, and scrutiny of the

police was invited through minor scandals in the late fifties, and as a result of more serious indiscretions of brutality, perjury and fraud, in the early sixties (p.69).

Social legislative changes indicated the presence of modernizing discourses. In October 1965, for instance, capital punishment was abolished, constituting at this time the 'the most significant of all the pieces of civilizing legislation' (Marwick, 1990, p.146). Other law and order legislative changes were driven by a desire to tackle age-old problems of disorder, particularly with regard to various 'vices', by clarifying and tightening legal powers and punishments in areas of moral conduct. As a consequence, however, these changes allowed the traditional London underworld to modernize its own illegal and legitimate activities (Kelland, 1996; Chibnall, 1999).⁴

At the beginning of the sixties, the process of modernization in the underworld was perceived and acted upon by professional thieves such as Bruce Reynolds. Faced by less information about potential targets and greater organization in the protection of the movement of cash, he concluded that there was a need to form larger gangs, or 'firms' of acquaintances that would plan more sophisticated robberies of, for example, armoured vans or valuable train 'packages' (Reynolds, 1995, pp.239-257).⁵ This consolidation of the emergence of project crime began to appear more frequently in British film in this period. A more disturbing trend was that there was a five-fold increase in the use of firearms in robberies between 1961 and 1967 (Chibnall, 1977,

⁴ The Street Offences Act (1959) encouraged prostitutes to rely on organized crime (Campbell, 1996, pp.215-216). The Licensing Act (1961) discriminated against smaller clubs encouraging criminal syndication and police corruption (Kelland, 1996, pp.109-112). Finally, the Betting and Gaming Act (1960) provided opportunities for illegal bookmakers to go legitimate.

⁵ In 1963 Reynolds' firm combined with another one for the 'Great Train Robbery', a symbolic challenge to authority met by unambiguously severe and unexpected sentences of thirty years for the main offenders. The robbers were not armed and Reynolds believed that the violence used on the train driver was exaggerated to undermine any glamour that might be attached to their crime (p.368). This did little to deter violent robbery, and in fact the trend was in the opposite direction.

p.69), and in the 1966 general election, law and order emerged for the first time as a major campaign issue (Marwick, 1990, p.144). Thus, an important context is established for the consideration of discourses of crime in this period in which there are significant changes in the nature of criminal organization and policing and the emergence of law and order as a more troubling socio-political problem.

8.2 Genre

It is proposed that during the period 1959-1963, the crime genre has a claim to social realism through the use of more naturalistic styles of acting and setting, but particularly also by the way that crime films refer to contemporaneous changes in underworld organization (Chibnall, 1999, p.98). A significant number of examples can be seen as documenting a society in transition, revealing cultural, commercial and moral anxieties (p.108). This section will scrutinize this claim, looking at the wider period of 1957-1965, using the rhetorical modes of dramatic film - realism and melodrama. How do films at this time reference the cultural verisimilitude of contemporary crime and the anxieties and instabilities of everyday reality? Do they seek primarily to represent or explain the world as it is or as it is believed to be, or do they try more to construct the moral legibility of 'how things are and how they should be'? Specific attention will be given to a consideration of the function of crime within the generic organization and rhetorical modes of crime drama.

Firstly, it is important to note that, compared to the previous period, a greater proportion of criminal-centred narratives characterize this one. Whereas about a half of all professional crime films between 1950 and 1956 were law enforcement or investigation stories, this figure fell to around a fifth during the next nine years. Thus,

regardless of the quality of the genre's shift to realism, there was a quantifiable increase in the depiction of criminal activity outside of the more marginalized context of the heroic individualism of action melodrama and the middle-class professionalism of law enforcement narratives.

Since there were fewer law enforcement films at this time, there were, of course, more criminal-centred narratives, but their diversity makes it difficult to produce definitive categories or straightforward summaries. Certain types of films, such as heist thrillers, have a coherence that makes them readily identifiable, whilst others are more hybrid. Nevertheless, it is suggested that prior to the end of the B film market, and despite the saturation of American influences on the British underworld film, a 'coherent and sophisticated genre was beginning to emerge' (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999, p.12). Thus, as well as the enquiry into the rhetorical modes of the crime drama as a genre of social realism, this section is also concerned with the question of generic coherence.

Underworld organized crime such as vice and protection racketeering was represented more thoroughly in British film in this period than ever before, but this was not without generic diversity. There were many films that depicted professional crime, but not many that might be called gangster or underworld films. There was a large group of films that addressed the topicality of prostitution and striptease (*The Flesh is Weak*, *Passport to Shame*, *The Shakedown*, *Too Hot to Handle*, *The Painted Smile* (1962), *Jungle Street* and *The Small World of Sammy Lee*); but they are generically very different films. Protection racketeering was less common (*Man with a Gun* (1958) and *The Frightened City* [1961]) and gambling was usually a background underworld

context, such as in *Piccadilly Third Stop* (1960) or *The Small World of Sammy Lee*.

There were several films that are realistic for their reference to contemporaneous changes in underworld organization, such as *Offbeat* or *The Informers*, to which must be added British cinema's most significant attempt to interpret gangster melodrama, Joseph Losey's and Merton Park's *The Criminal*.

The different generic approaches to underworld drama can be illustrated by the brief consideration of the following five A films: *The Shakedown*, *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1965), *The Small World of Sammy Lee*, *The Frightened City*, and *The Criminal*. If *The Shakedown* is 'standard B-film making extended to feature length' (Chibnall, 1999, p.106), it demonstrates how oddly structured the low-budget crime film could be. It starts by following prostitution racketeer Augie Cortona (Terence Morgan) on his release from prison. His 'manor' has been taken over by Gollar (Harry H. Corbett), so that there is the potential to create an anti-heroic gangster melodrama of gang rivalry and doomed trajectory. Instead, however, it becomes villain-centred since Cortona sets up a blackmail conspiracy that exploits the respectable middle-class banker (John Salew). In addition, there is also a parallel investigation plot involving an undercover policewoman. The overall effect is neither a moving melodrama of victimization nor a convincing presentation of the verisimilitude of vice racketeering.

Similarly, *He Who Rides a Tiger* is also a hybrid crime film that begins with the release of a criminal, but it is more assuredly constructed. It is a portrait of professional cat burglar Peter Rayston (Tom Bell), pursued by a conflicted police force tainted by corruption. Generically, it has *noir* fatalism as the final robbery ends in failure, but not capture. However, it is not a straightforward melodramatic struggle of 'cops and

robbers' because it has a realist aesthetic that attempts to represent its anti-hero not only in the context of the verisimilitude of the professionalism of the underworld, but also metaphorically (Rayston as a fox, a hunted wild animal) and proverbially ('he who rides a tiger can never dismount'). Rayston was based on a real contemporary cat burglar, Peter Gulston (also known as Peter Scott), who, as in the film, was the 'grateful apprentice' of experienced thief George 'Taters' Chatham, an underworld figure who took part in the Eastcastle Street mail-van robbery, represented in the film as 'Peepers' Woodley (Peter Madden). The film's desire to be authentic is revealed in its attention to the detail of Rayston's lifestyle and methods, such as the reading of society magazines to research potential targets and the celebratory indulgences of hotels, clothes, women, parties and cars following successful robberies. However, it also partly a romantic drama in depicting Rayston's relationship with Joanne (Judi Dench) and her illegitimate child that crosses over into mainstream social realist drama and the social problem film.

Most often, however, it is the tensions and settlements between realism and melodrama that are the defining generic characteristics of the 'underworld film'. For instance, Ken Hughes' *The Small World of Sammy Lee*, adapted from his own television play, is a film in which the realist mode is more significant than its individual melodramatic elements. As in *The Criminal*, there is moral ambiguity and a commitment to showing the world as it is rather than as it should be. The basic plot is one of victimization in which Sammy Lee (Anthony Newley), a compère in a Soho strip club, owes gambling debts to a gangster, Connor, whose collectors, Fred (Kenneth J. Warren) and Johnny (Clive Colin Bowler), give him five hours to pay or he will have his face cut. Connor is never shown, though he speaks to Lee on the phone, so there is

the intimidation of villainy, but no characterization, and Lee's problems are self-inflicted. But it is not without its moments of pathos and sentimentality.⁶

However, the basis of its realism is its sense of character and place, its use of locations to create a 'small world' that is a microcosm of social change. For instance, the film opens with a title sequence of shots taken from a slow moving vehicle as it wanders around the Soho streets, with the camera turned to the restaurants from all around the world, the coffee bars and strip clubs and the tower blocks, *showing* rather than *setting* a sense of place and change, in the same way that it reveals the artifice of striptease by going behind the curtains to disclose the contrivance of public performance.⁷ This film, although it is very individual, contains many elements that encapsulate some of the main constituents of the crime genre in this period: the jazz soundtrack, the striptease fad, the materialistic wife (Miriam Karlin) and her emasculated husband (Warren Mitchell), self-reflexivity, and the cultural verisimilitude of a society in transition. In respect of this last attribute, crime functions in this film, particularly through the characters of Fred and Johnny, to embody the contemporary instabilities and anxieties, for instance about youth, affluence and moral dissolution. Fred, the old timer, complains that you used to be able to tell who the villains were because they wore black hats. He looks at Johnny's crisp suit and tie and is confused because he looks like a bank clerk. For Fred, the intimidation of violence appears to be just part of the job, whereas he sees in his companion an eager youth who does not look like a gangster but seems to be in love with violence and fashion.

⁶ Such as when Patsy (Julia Foster) endures a humiliating performance at the club in order to save Lee's job and the last minute arrival of the gangsters at the coach station that prevent him from running away with her.

⁷ *Sammy Lee* was filmed by Wolfgang Suschitsky, a documentary cameraman who was later specifically selected by Mike Hodges to be the cinematographer on *Get Carter*, another professional crime film with a realistic sense of place (Chibnall and Murphy, 1999, p.120).

Two final examples of underworld films are significant for their different approaches to gangster melodrama. Like Rayston in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, Paddy Damion (Sean Connery) in *The Frightened City* is also a 'climber' working with his senior partner Wally Smith (Kenneth Griffith). But when Smith is injured, Damion decides to join a protection racket to support them both. It is a film that Chibnall identifies as being authentic and tough because of its attention to the detail of police argot and practice and its cynical tone (1999, pp.107-108). Whilst this realism is extensive, it is primarily a gangster melodrama. Damion is more of a victim-hero than an anti-hero. He is used in the murder of his friend, gangster Alf Peters (David Davies), who opposes the syndication of the racket. Peters' death is ordered by Zhernikov (Herbert Lom), the 'Mr Big' and foreign 'hidden' true villain. Damion's basic goodness is apparent because he is a craft criminal who needs nerve and skill rather than violence and intimidation. The racketeers need him precisely because his lack of thuggery fits in with their modern approach. Pathetically, the abuse of his friendship for the dead gangster should make us care about the 'justice gap', the difficulty of the police in obtaining convictions. Damion chooses to do the right thing, to reveal Zhernikov's guilt, even if he has to be leant on by tough Inspector Sayers (John Gregson) in the process.

Linda Williams suggests that realism is used by melodrama to appear modern, but that in melodrama, realism serves melodramatic passion and action (1998, p.65). This is very much the case in *The Frightened City* and this is where it differs from *The Criminal*, which is a realistic interpretation of gangster melodrama. It does not attempt to reveal good and evil embodied in individuals and establish moral polarities through victimization or revelation of villainy. Instead, its auteuristic concerns are for the parallel structures and processes of power in prison and outside that reproduce criminals

such as Johnny Bannion (Stanley Baker) through its use of Brechtian realism and ambivalent anti-heroism (Chibnall, 1999, pp.101-104, Spicer, 1999, pp.88-90).

Other types of criminal-centred films are also distinctive in terms of their negotiation between realism and melodrama and their relative hybridity. The heist film, that emerged in America in the late forties and early fifties when elaborate robberies became the central dramatic concern of gangster films (Hardy, 1997, p.71), is one generic category that is particularly distinctive in British film in the late fifties and early sixties.⁸ Unlike in *The Criminal*, where Bannion is a 'heister' in the context of an extensive underworld subculture, most British heist films at this time do not draw upon this same verisimilitude or attempt to engage with crime discourses or law and order problems. They are formulaic, but diverse in setting, mood and theme.

For instance, A films such as MGM's *Cairo* (1963) and *The Day They Robbed the Bank of England* (1960) and the B film *Calculated Risk* (1963) are structured around the planning and execution of ultimately unsuccessful robberies, but otherwise they are quite different. *Cairo* is a re-make of *The Asphalt Jungle* transposed to Egypt. Travelogue locations broaden the transatlantic casting of Hollywood leads and British character actors to international appeal, whilst the themes of greed and the melodramatic desire of the anti-hero (Richard Johnson) to return to a homeland of innocence and plenitude remain the same. *The Day They Robbed the Bank of England* is a heist film set in a Victorian London (when 'Ireland still struggled against the might of England for Independence') starring American Aldo Ray as a bank robber recruited by 'the Movement' to mastermind a symbolic strike against the 'Queen's cashbox'.

⁸ The heist film coincided with and was inflected by a particularly *noir* sensibility and moral code whereby the robbery was ultimately unsuccessful, and the robbers' hopes imploded through internal feuding or external fate and ill luck (Clay, 1998).

In contrast, *Calculated Risk* is a heist thriller that is set in the contemporary verisimilitude of professional crime, and it illustrates how the social realism of the crime film does not just have to be about the truthfulness of representing criminal organization in transition. It has been questioned for the veracity of its underworld representation, for its 'style-blind ex-cons' who do not conform to what are seen as more authentic transformations in the London underworld of style-conscious gangsters socializing with wealthy 'thrill-seekers' (Chibnall, 1999, p.105). The underworld representatives in this film may not share the sartorial preoccupations of gangsters such as the Krays, but this misses the point that they are meant to be unremarkable 'ordinary people'. They are a 'crew' of semi-professionals assembled for a bank robbery, rather than the more stereotypical gang of toughs led by Soho club owners seen in so many British crime thrillers. However, this is the limit of its updating of its generic verisimilitude. Conventionally, bad luck contributes to failure and here the intervention of fate is central. The 'old lag' Kip (John Rutland) is such an unsuccessful thief that he is seen as being unlucky and his presence proves to be fatal when an unexploded wartime bomb contributes to the predestined trajectory of the narrative. This is a genre that works through the moral ambiguity of identification with the desires and motivations of criminals in search of the wish-fulfilment of wealth acquisition in money-based societies. In this case, are we meant to feel that they were unlucky or that they deserved to fail?

However, other examples show that the heist film's very distinctive conventions at this time also provided a dramatic basis for the expression of social anxieties and instabilities. The story structure of an elaborate robbery carried out by a team of experts, for instance, had an affinity with militaristic themes, as seen in different ways in *The*

League of Gentlemen and *A Prize of Arms*. Melodramatically, the ex-Army officers in *The League of Gentlemen* are victim-heroes whose cause can be seen as being just. The robbery allows a fantasy of 'how things should be', the recovery of service and the compensation of money, whilst the first part of the film is the revelation of 'how things are' through the depiction of the robbers' circumstances and motivations of 'disillusion' and 'estrangement' (O'Sullivan, 1997, p.189).

A Prize of Arms is more of a *noir* thriller with a dark visual style, an extremely lengthy robbery sequence, and a more pessimistic, apocalyptic finale. In *The League of Gentlemen*, the gang's leader, Hyde (Jack Hawkins), becomes criminalized through bitterness, a desire to strike back at 'a postwar system' (p.184) that he blames for causing his redundancy from the Army and separation from his wife. His reaction is inappropriate since it is aimed neither at his former employer nor his estranged spouse. In contrast, Turpin (Stanley Baker) in *A Prize of Arms* has a more logical target for his enmity, the payroll of the Army that discarded him for running a minor black market racket in Hamburg after the war when much bigger 'fiddles' were in operation. The scale of his sense of injustice can be measured against the timing of the robbery that coincides with mobilization for a post-colonial crisis in the Middle East.⁹

These two narratives of the criminalization of amateurs, then, use the generic verisimilitude of the heist film to dramatize contemporary transformations of class and masculinity without any particular concern for the representation of actual professional crime. Other A films, however, such as *Piccadilly Third Stop* or *Independent Artists' Payroll* (1961) are more discursive about real crime. *Piccadilly Third Stop* is another

⁹ Class differentiates the cultural 'truthfulness' of the two films' use of the heist trope: Baker's anti-heroic working-class malaise contrasts starkly with Hawkins' middle-class mid-life crisis and light, dreamy nostalgia, an important discourse of masculinity in the period discussed later in the chapter.

heist thriller that borrows from *The Asphalt Jungle*, this time set in Mayfair and Chelsea and dramatizing the decline of the certainties of class and morality brought on by the instability of affluence (Chibnall, 1999, pp.106-107). However, *Payroll* is particularly significant for the way that its generic conventions are underpinned by the contemporaneity of project crime. It is a heist thriller in which the small gang of professional criminals conventionally self-destructs through self-preservation, double-cross and external pressures. There is some melodramatic characterization with the motivation of the inside man, and particularly with the emphasis on the victimization of the widow of the security van driver killed in the raid who attempts to gain her own justice by investigating the suspects. The film is updated with particular attention to realism through the use of its provincial locations in Newcastle and an attempt to represent a threat of project crime and an escalating technological 'battle' between security and organized crime, but ultimately it serves the interests of melodramatic pathos and the active restoration of order.

A distinctive variation of the heist film, that might be termed the 'aftermath' thriller, began to emerge in the late fifties, particularly as a second or co-feature. The aftermath film is structured around the immediate consequences of a crime, usually robbery, which concentrates upon the dramatic impact of the crime or the proximity of victims and offenders to create tension and suspense. Examples would include *Naked Fury*, *The Man in the Back Seat*, Theatrecraft's (Guido Coen) *Strongroom* and *Touch of Death* (1962).¹⁰ These films may have some discourses about contemporary law and order, but they are generally not an attempt to be realistic about professional crime or changes in

¹⁰ *Clash by Night* (1963) is a variation since the aftermath situation is set up when a gangster is sprung from a prison bus and the other prisoners are locked in a guarded barn doused in petrol, so that offenders become victims.

underworld organization. They are melodramatic, particularly in terms of using crime to moralize about people's relationship to money. Above all, though, the function of crime is to contrive a dramatic set-piece, often a life-threatening situation of murder and consequent capital punishment or the playing out of natural justice.

In *Naked Fury*, for example, the main space of action is a crumbling warehouse, where the gang gather in the aftermath of a £50,000 safe robbery during which the watchman dies from his injuries and his daughter is held captive. American Reed de Rouen plays Eddy, the improbable leader of the gang and there is no attempt to explain his background or motivation, but he is an ambivalent anti-hero who behaves decently to the victimized, protecting her from the more unstable Johnny (Kenneth Cope). The dialogue contains some underworld cant, such as 'peter racket' and the gang use an American 'getaway' car, but there is no sustained attempt at underworld realism.¹¹

At the beginning of *The Man in the Back Seat*, a bookmaker is 'mugged' and the aftermath concerns the robbers' attempts to dispose of the unconscious bookie and abscond with the takings to which he is handcuffed. Suspense is created by speculation about what they will do with the victim and whether or not he will live, but it is also a melodramatic tale of innocence and experience, since first-timer Frankie (Keith Faulkner) is fated to help Tony (Derren Nesbitt), a professional thief, who has broken his foot. Frankie wants the money to reassert himself as the provider for his wife Jean (Carol White), whereas Tony is just a villain who murders the victim and blames Frankie. Natural justice is achieved when Frankie, tormented by guilty visions of the dead bookie 'in the back seat', causes the death of his corrupter in a car crash.

¹¹ 'Peter' in underworld slang means a safe and a safebreaker is a 'peterman'.

In *Strongroom*, the aftermath of a bank robbery leaves the manager and his secretary trapped in a vault over a holiday weekend with only twelve hours of air. The bank stands for tradition. It has a vault dating back to 1937 and a hard-working manager and his secretary staying late even on Easter Saturday. The raiders are, as gang member Griff (Derren Nesbitt) reflects in the getaway van, 'Not known in the underworld'. Brothers Alec (Morgan Sheppard) and Len (Keith Faulkner), and Griff, have their own firm of car breakers. They are working-class entrepreneurs who plan to use the money to 'get on'. They are not part of a conventional conspiratorial underworld reassuringly vanquished by a vigilant police force, but driven and nervous 'first-timers' looking for their place on the forecourt of affluence. Unlike earlier films in which robbery inevitably and routinely escalates to murder and property crime, it is the escalation that is the dramatic focus, not just from the victims' perspective, but also from the criminals' point-of-view. When the secretary's death is announced off-screen, the final shot is a close-up capturing the reaction of the two robbers as they hear 'She's dead sir'. Thus, in realistic terms, villainy becomes humanized weakness as criminals become more central as characters that impact on victims.

The aftermath film, then, was usually a taut, fatal thriller in which the function of crime was often to dramatize the futility of the illegitimate pursuit of money and death. In *Touch of Death*, for instance, it is the money itself that becomes fatal when, during the robbery at a garage, poisons stored in the safe contaminate the cash. Pete (William Lucas), the gang's leader, is an armed robber with a criminal record, whilst Len (David Sumner), is a fresh initiate who has become convinced that 'You need money if you want to get anywhere in this world'. Pete is even more competitive, insisting that it is

‘Dog eat dog, look after number one’, and even the garage owner himself is involved in undeclared private deals.

Victimization, whether within the context of the thriller more generally or as crime melodrama was a common way of dramatizing professional crime during this period. *The Flesh is Weak* and *Passport to Shame* are melodramas concerned with the topical cultural verisimilitude of prostitution addressed in the Wolfenden Report and the exposés of vice racketeering by crime reporters. Melodrama addresses not the actual wrong, but the effect of the wrong, so that women appear as the ‘troublesome symptom of criminality in British crime films of this period’ (Chadder, 1999, p.79). Both films have innocent victim-heroines who are tricked or coerced into prostitution by ethnic vice racketeers, the Giani brothers in *The Flesh is Weak* and Biagi (Herbert Lom) in *Passport to Shame*. The latter film does rush to a ‘feel-good conclusion’ (p.77) as Biagi receives his natural justice, and in the former the middle-class philanthropist rescues the victim. However, *The Flesh is Weak* does have a more open resolution so that instead of a return to lost innocence there is the more explanatory rhetoric of realism that tries to present the idea of an ongoing crime problem with the use of an end title suggesting ‘This is not the END’.

Blakely’s B film *The Painted Smile* takes a slightly different approach to the same subject by being more of a thriller. Tom (Tony Wickert), an award winning industrial design student, becomes a murder suspect caught between the police and the real murderer, Kleinie (Kenneth Griffith), a club-footed gang boss who controls club hostesses and prostitutes. As a ‘punter’, Tom is victimized by Kleinie’s racket, a conventional criminal conspiracy indebted to the moral polarities of the melodramatic

mode. Tom finds trouble when he has 'One night of fun' with his pals, 'to break lose before society swallowed us up', he explains later, and so he gets to experience the wages of non-conformity.¹²

Other thrillers, however, are even less concerned with the verisimilitude of professional crime. Films such as Butcher's *Pit of Darkness* (1961) and *Impact* primarily use crime as a context for the dangerous threat overcome by the victim-hero. *Pit of Darkness*, in particular, seems locked firmly within its own generic world from the opening moments in which safe-designer Logan (William Franklyn) wakes up on a bomb site in Wapping with amnesia and three weeks of his life missing, to the finale when he outmanoeuvres the robbers who coerced him into crime and kidnapped his wife.

Impact has a similar generic struggle between good and evil, but it does have a greater claim to realism than *Pit of Darkness*. Jack Moir (Conrad Phillips) is an investigative crime journalist who is framed by his nemesis, foreign gang boss and diamond smuggler, 'The Duke' (George Pastell). In prison, Jack plans an elaborate revenge with a fellow inmate so that on release he is able to clear his own name and deliver the villain to the police. This is all very generically conventional, but there are some references to the shift to legal gambling and of 'big time crooks operating within the law', and its anxiety about criminals being beyond the law is perhaps significant beyond the moral polarities of the melodrama.

¹² Chadder (1999) suggests that the logic of both *The Flesh is Weak* and *Passport to Shame* is that female desire needs to be controlled through preferred models of femininity such as domesticity and romance. *The Painted Smile* is similarly regulatory, but within its thriller structure it attempts to be morally legible not just about sexuality, but also about youthful rebellion by demystifying it as a 'revolt against conformity'.

The victimization thriller, then, could vary quite considerably in the way that the threat of crime is used melodramatically. For example the setting and theme of Butcher's' B film *Man From Tangier* (1957) is a cursory context for the heroic trajectory of action in which a film stuntman (Robert Hutton) becomes accidentally pursued by forged passport racketeers, but who still manages to extricate a holocaust survivor (Lisa Gastoni) from the villain's conspiracy. It presents the truthfulness of the crime problem by using newspaper headlines, but it does not seek to engage in any depth with the postwar legacy of refugees, legal identity or immigration control.

In contrast, however, *The Heart Within* (1957), another second feature, does address the conflicts and troubles of contemporary immigration within the same generic verisimilitude. Victor (Earl Cameron), a West Indian immigrant, is suspected of murder, but the true villain is revealed as Mr Johnson (Clifford Evans), a pawnbroker who has been using 'coloureds' as 'postmen in the narcotics racket'. The film pushes us to feel the need for integration and the stability of work, 'to belong somewhere' and to recognise that 'money's got to be earned'. It is Victor's ambition to work as a crane driver in the docks and his skills are ably demonstrated when he uses the machine to crush Johnson under a stack of steel drums.

Also distinctive are those films that are concerned with other types of victim-offender relationships, especially the impact of crime on those people more closely associated with criminals, such as family members. The function of crime in this case is often primarily to dramatize conflicts about money and personal relationships. Like victimization thrillers, they continued a tradition that was seen in earlier films such as *Once a Sinner* or *The Frightened Man*. However, in this period, although it could

provide films that have some style and thematic coherence, there was a tendency for these films, perhaps in imitation or competition with television, to search for novelty or be self-conscious about the genre. They are frequently baroque, irregularly shaped films, disengaging and unmoving B films that neither have the power to explain the world, nor to make us feel concerned about it.

Typically, victim-offender films dramatize crime not in relation to the verisimilitude of the underworld or specific crime problems, but as part of the melodramatization of the conflicts and troubles of parental, generational and marital relationships: in *Kill Me Tomorrow* (1957) a crime reporter uses criminals to raise money for his dying son's operation; in *No Road Back* (1957) and *Dangerous Afternoon* (1961) a criminal parent is the corrupt provider of self-advancement; in *The Break* (1962) the damaged child grows up into an armed robber in a society of marital fracture; and the instability of affluence and masculine anxiety in marriage pose a *Dilemma* when the wife's secret criminal life intrudes into the marital home.

Theatrecraft's *Dangerous Afternoon* is a typical example of this kind of victim-offender film. It is based on a stage play and set in a 'Boarding Establishment for Ladies' where the owner, 'Miss Frost' (Ruth Dunning), is a former jewel thief and escaped convict, but all the elderly boarders are former professionals.¹³ She has a child, Freda (Joanna Durham) and her mother's past crimes have secretly paid for her education and art training, but whereas earlier films, such as *The Frightened Man*, in which the parent is part of the destructive corruption of the underworld conspiracy, are tragic moral tales of parental irresponsibility, *Dangerous Afternoon* is more ambiguous. Ira has left the underworld and to some extent has been 'punished' by being confined to

¹³ *The Ladykillers* works by the juxtaposition of a sweet old lady against a gang of security van robbers, but here it is the old ladies who are 'bent'.

a wheelchair following a fall in her prison break. This is an unusual crime film a female ensemble cast and one that refuses to engage with the realism of the contemporary underworld. It asserts traditional values of community, self-restraint and conscience (the film ends with Irma turning herself over to the police). Freda's youthful self-confidence is directed into the institution of marriage with a journalist, a middle-class role model. The alliance between conservatism and modernity typical of melodrama is perfectly encapsulated in one of Freda's wedding presents, a 'mother-love' piece of semi-abstract ceramic sculpture.

Blakeley's *The Break* is similarly lacking in realism, though less modernizing since it is a rather old-fashioned mystery thriller set at a remote Devon farm and guest house. Typical middle-class hero, novelist Greg Parker (Tony Britton), prevents the escape of a fugitive armed robber who is being aided by a gang of smugglers based at the farm. The film has a distinctly metropolitan sensibility, with the visitors to the country encouraged to make jokes about inbreeding because of the presence of a dumb housekeeper and her simple son. Generational problems, especially between parents and children, are one of the key thematics that run through many crime films at this time. In *The Break*, Jacko Thomas (William Lucas) is a damaged criminal. Their father had placed him, with his sister (who has not been affected by her experience), in an orphanage and hardly visited them. 'From the day he dumped us in that institution we were nothing', he reflects. The current adult generation is also dysfunctional. Parker is escaping the pain of his divorce pursued by his wife's private detective, and Thomas' criminal charisma and potent masculinity attracts the adulterous farmer's wife

Other examples, such as ACT Films' *Dilemma* or Merton Park's *Face of a Stranger* (1964) are more straightforwardly effective thrillers that dramatize the impact on domestic relationships of money acquired through crime. In *Dilemma*, Harry Barnes (Peter Halliday), a teacher, arrives at his suburban home on the day of his second wedding anniversary to find a dead man in the bathroom. He immediately suspects that his wife Jean (Ingrid Hafner) is responsible, so to protect her, 'for better, for worse', he decides to bury the body under the floorboards. As a thriller, it invites the viewer to speculate about who the corpse is, what happened and what is going to happen next, but as realism it has no interest in explaining why Jean is the 'respectable front' for a dangerous cocaine racket. As melodrama, the crime is not the real anxiety but the pretext for an expression of anxiety about the affect of affluence on traditional social organization. Harry's mother cautions her son that 'Money isn't everything' and her concern is that Jean's money means that Harry has not had to work as hard as his father.

Another distinctive group of crime films can be discerned that are more offender-centred. They are characteristic, not for their generic influences, which vary from Hollywood imitation to more indigenous or hybrid forms, and not because they are realistic about the changing nature of the underworld or professional crime, but because they dramatize the impact of social change, particularly in relation to individualism, community and affluence, and gender and generational problematics. Just a few examples can be used to show the diversity of the crime genre in this period.

Films such as *Nowhere to Go* (1958), *Hell Drivers*, *Tread Softly Stranger* (1958), *The Challenge* (1960) and *The Gentle Trap* (1960), for instance, are amongst the many crime films that have American influences. In Seth Holt's *Nowhere to Go*, for example,

American actor George Nader plays Canadian criminal, Paul Gregory, who plans an elaborate confidence trick in London, using fellow thief Vic Sloane (Bernard Lee), who by telling him to 'Be lucky', engages him in fraternal criminal argot. However, with truthfulness to *noir*, Gregory's scheme fails through bad luck and double-cross, until he becomes a man-on-the-run, wanted for Vic's murder. He seeks refuge in the underworld by approaching Sullivan (Harry H. Corbett), a residually spiv-like gangster. He would like to help someone who he sees as a 'good thief', but conventionally he rejects someone who is wanted for murder. 'You're on your own', he declares. He may have 'nowhere to go' but he is helped by Bridget (Maggie Smith), an ex-debutante and girlfriend of a crooked City financier who has fled to Tangier. Gregory dies on Bridget's family's country estate mistakenly believing that she has betrayed him. But not before she recognises his lack of socialization, how he is 'Cutting himself off from...', to which he anticipates ironically, '...decent human society'.

This questioning of identity, of individualism and socialization, so taken for granted in earlier Ealing films, is also carried through at the stylistic level, where naturalism is replaced by a more stylized approach. The film starts at night in a railway yard, with a long prison break sequence with hardly any dialogue. This alternative form of narration is continued with a number of other distinctly metropolitan stylistic elements - a jazz saxophone soundtrack, disorientating flashback sequences, abrupt elliptical montage sequences, asynchronous sound and aesthetic compositions using mirrors as frame-within-the frame, so that it transcends any straightforward adaptation of doomed anti-heroism. It has the self-consciousness of the art film in its exploration of the nature of the individual and society. Whereas the earlier *The Long Arm* represents a move towards a more subjective, bourgeois 'looking-at-self' in the tradition of patriarchal

professionalism, *Nowhere to Go* constitutes an even more subjective, introspective middle-class intellectualism. *The Long Arm* looks like an attempt to 'play safe' within the context of an uncertain market, by using the popular tradition of detective fiction, whereas *Nowhere to Go* seems distinctive because Ealing was coming to an end and this allowed a certain amount of high-brow seriousness to emerge within the confines of a staple popular genre.

Hell Drivers is also another significant crime melodrama that anchors Hollywood generic conventions within a British setting, and transformed Stanley Baker from Rank 'villain' to ambivalent hero (Spicer, 1999, pp.85-87). Unusually, it is a melodrama of de-criminalization since Baker plays an ex-convict trying to escape his past through absorption in work, but only to become victimized by a fraud that exploits the drivers and exposes them to danger. Its cultural verisimilitude of working-class labour and group dynamics is authentically recreated, while its competitive individualism and anti-heroic will to succeed is taken from American melodrama.

More typical is a male melodrama of criminalization such as *Tread Softly Stranger*, although, like *Hell Drivers*, its virile working-class masculinity, *noir* visual style and sexually attractive, ambivalent anti-heroism was a new direction in the British crime film (Spicer, 1999, pp.84-85). However, other crime melodramas of this kind, such as *The Challenge* and *The Gentle Trap* are more committed to Hollywood generic verisimilitude than they are to the aesthetics of new wave realism. Both illustrate the transatlantic fusion of *noir* and the verisimilitude of British craft and project crime. Once again it is the conventional unambiguity of property crime as easy money that provides the context for the unfolding conflicts of the melodrama. In *The Gentle Trap*,

Johnny Ryan (Spencer Teakle), a locksmith on his first job, is the 'fall guy' in a jewel robbery for a *femme fatale* (Dawn Adams) and gang boss and club owner Ricky Barnes (Martin Benson), whilst in *The Challenge*, Jim (Anthony Quayle) suffers a similar victimization from Billy (Jayne Mansfield) and Kristy (Carl Mohner). Last minute rescues allow the recovery of the melodramatic 'spaces of innocence' of romantic and familial love.¹⁴

Male criminalization also featured in more indigenous or different international forms. Basil Dearden's *A Place to Go* (1963) is an example of low-life realism that dramatizes working-class family life on location in a Bethnal Green in the process of transition from slums to high-rise flats. It reveals anxieties about the destruction of the street community and the dissolution of the ties and responsibilities of extended family life represented by one particular family, the Flints. It focuses on Ricky Flint (Mike Sarne), the eldest son, who is helping East End gangster Jack Ellerman (John Slater) to rob the cigarette factory where he works. As in *It Always Rains on Sunday*, in which Slater plays spiv Lou Hyams, and unlike a lot of crime melodrama in which crime arises from foreign contagion, crime is part of the fabric of community life. However, the film's realism has the same conservative tone as melodrama. Ricky's motivation is a one-off job that he thinks will give him independence and freedom, but the outbreak of violence during and after the robbery illustrates freedom's dangers and justifies Ricky's sublimation within the more reassuring stability of marriage.¹⁵

¹⁴ 'Melodrama begins and wants to end, in a space of innocence...[T]his quest, not for the new but for the old space of innocence, is the fundamental reason for melodrama's profound conservatism' (Williams, 1998, p.65).

¹⁵ This theme is encapsulated in the scene in which Ricky releases the cage bird which is immediately threatened by a cat.

Another film directed by Dearden about male criminalization, however, is very different. *The Secret Partner* (1961), made for MGM, could easily be mistaken for an Edgar Wallace thriller. John Brent (Stewart Granger) appears to be the victim of an elaborate conspiracy when cash is taken from the company safe. He has a criminal record for embezzlement and incriminating evidence seems to force him to escape from police custody. The twist is that Brent has been victimizing himself to provide a perfect alibi, even to the extent of making his wife (Haya Harareet) have an affair.

Melodramatically, therefore, Brent's latest criminalization means that his wife is the real victim since she feels abused and rejects the money without love. Carol Reed's *The Running Man* (1963) has similar themes since Rex (Laurence Harvey) loses sight of the importance of love and develops a taste for insurance fraud that alienates his wife Stella (Lee Remick), although with its Spanish locations, Technicolor and less restricted narration, it is clearly a very different type of film to *The Secret Partner*.

The hybridity of the crime film in this period is well illustrated by *Jungle Street*, a second feature that dramatizes the escalating criminalization of a young offender. Terry (David McCallum), as elderly Jewish tailor Mr Rose (Meier Tzelniker) observes, is a 'sick boy'. He spends his spare time at the 'Adam and Eve Club', where he has become an obsessive voyeur of stripper, Sue (Jill Ireland). He is also responsible for the mugging of a 65 year-old man. It is 'virtually a teenage social problem film' (Murphy, 1992, p.211) situated in a wider contemporaneity beyond professional crime and the striptease 'fad'. In particular, there are anxieties about economic and social change. Full employment is seen to have spoilt young people. A police sergeant complains, 'Trouble with kids today. They don't want to work'. However, it is also influenced by new wave

realism since Terry's 'kitchen sink' home is the scene of generational conflict, hope and aspiration.

Beyond these demarcated, but fluid generic boundaries, there are hybrid films that are more difficult to fix as being one thing or another. This would include B films such as *Bomb in the High Street* (1961), which is partly a heist film, but one that provides a context for the dramatization of anxieties about class mobility and affluence when a young couple in love across the class divide find their liminal space invaded by crime (Chibnall, 1999, p.99). *Gaolbreak* is a similar, though less engaging, collision of crime with the melodrama of personal relationships since it features a rather straightforward jewel robbery conspiracy compromised by the young escaped convict who is desperate to see his pregnant girlfriend. Other notable examples include Blakeley's *Rag Doll* (1961), which like the same company's *The Painted Smile*, attempts to demystify youth, though in this case by combining crime melodrama with low-life realism, and Merton Park's *Act of Murder* (1964), which begins as a conventional victimization thriller, but develops into a dark psychological thriller of passionate crime which highlights the instability of bourgeois marriage. Although there are problems of generic identity, it is clear that these are films that do address the sense of a society in transition more than any concern for the realities of the criminal milieu.

Finally, in relation to law enforcement films, it is in the police film, often a first feature, more than the conventional investigation B thriller, that significant changes in generic organization can be discerned. There was a shift in the police melodrama, from straightforward heroic action and the middle-class professionalism of the patriarchal establishment to more complex law enforcement narratives with moral ambivalence and

conflicted representation of policing. Realism extended beyond the servicing of the melodramatic pathos and action as it updated the cultural verisimilitude of crime and policing. However, the realist rhetoric was applied unevenly since it was acting more attentively upon the representation of the police, whilst at the same time there was still a tendency in these law enforcement films to dramatize professional crime solely as the eruption of murderous threats to be overcome.

John Ford's *Gideon's Day*, for instance, has some innovations for a police film, such as the use of colour, but otherwise it is quite traditional, whereas films such as *Hell is a City*, *The Informers* and *Tomorrow at Ten* (1962), show some important differences. In *Gideon's Day*, which uses a 'day-in-the-life' structure and voice-over-narration, Gideon (Jack Hawkins) has to deal with multiple cases rather than the more conventional singular crime, but they are still neatly resolved within the day's action. Hawkins once more plays the middle-class patriarch, a Scotland Yard Inspector with twenty-five years' service. He is the stereotypically devoted public servant sacrificing home life to the demands of fighting crime. His control is militaristic, part of a chain of command run by the telephone, interspersed with visits to crime scenes or to intimidate criminals with his unflappable, knowing presence. Crime functions as eruptions that keep the police *too* busy. It is melodramatically depicted as nasty and victimizing: young women killed by an absconding mental patient, for instance. Professional crime is conspiratorial: Delafield (Ronald Howard), resisting the traditional starvation route to artistic genius, organizes 'pay snatch' robberies, from companies infiltrated by his wife, to fund his desire to become a famous artist, and the 'posh boys', amateurs from Mayfair, rob and kill inexplicably for fun.

However, the inclusion of a corrupt policeman in the Delafields' conspiracy was an indication of the emergence of a more conflicted representation of law and order in the police film. Martineau (Stanley Baker), in *Hell is a City* (directed by Val Guest for Hammer), is the most striking example of this development. He is a construct of 'gritty northern realism' (provincial, working-class, dysfunctional private life), although overall, the anachronistic cultural verisimilitude of crime and conventional transatlantic casting of the villain, Starling (John Crawford), compromises the film's semi-documentary approach (Chibnall, 1999, p.102). The individualized struggle of 'cop and robber' moves towards a melodramatic rooftop fight finale, but the opportunity for 'natural justice' through the fall of the villain is declined in favour of the 'unnatural justice' of execution. In fact, Martineau's unease with Starling's execution, a concern for a childhood acquaintance with whom he is doubled on either side of the law, clouds the more traditional moral legibility of the police film. There is in effect a displacement of the melodrama away from law and order on to the masculine persona of Martineau himself since he is a victim of a snobbish wife who won't give him children

Ken Annakin's *The Informers*, made by Rank, updates the cultural verisimilitude of policing and the underworld by the realism of its locations and underworld cant (Chibnall, 1999, p.105), but also the moral polarities of its melodrama are shaken by a particularly conflicted and ambivalent law and order discourse. It starts conventionally with a specific crime problem, a serious threat involving highly organized bank robberies. Inspector Johnoe (Nigel Patrick) is also a traditional middle-class professional, but his profession is trying to adapt to scientific and technological methods and away from Johnoe's potentially compromising use of informants.

Melodramatically, Johnoe becomes a victim-hero caught between the disapproval of his

superior and an antagonistic colleague over his unsanctioned investigation, and the conspiracy that frames him for taking bribes and murders his informer. Resolution involves Johnoe confronting the 'hidden villain', Leon Sale (Frank Finlay), to force him to reveal Johnoe's innocence. But his dead informant's brother (Colin Blakely) sees Johnoe as being partly culpable and morally inferior to the murdered 'snout', and he organizes his own vigilante action against the gang. Thus, as well as anxieties about criminal organization, there is also a degree of moral illegibility about methods of policing that complicates the melodramatic clarity typical of earlier films such as *The Long Arm*.

Blakeley's *Tomorrow at Ten* is another film with a traditional form, but with new dimensions to the criminal and the police. The individualized struggle between Inspector Parnell (John Gregson) and kidnapper Marlow (Robert Shaw) is conventional, as is the thriller plot designed to create suspense around the kidnapped boy threatened by a bomb. Parnell is a dedicated officer, with a neglected wife in the suburbs, as typified by Jack Hawkins in *The Long Arm* and *Gideon's Day*. However, his commitment to the law reaches an acute level of professionalism that brings him into conflict with the higher ranks. Parnell is a 'career copper' with twenty years service and although he is 'softer' than Stanley Baker's Martineau in *Hell is a City*, he represents a similar challenge to the previous generation's more middle-class meritocracy.

In investigation thrillers, typically B films such as the Luckwells' *The Crooked Sky* (1957) and *Undercover Girl* (1958) or Butcher's *Danger by My Side* (1962), the moral certainties of the melodramatic mode were hardly affected by the realist imperatives seen in the police films. Typically, they have investigating heroes unearthing dangerous

foreign and indigenous conspiracies, and frequently employing transatlantic casting. In *The Crooked Sky*, for example, there is a joint investigation between an American Treasury Agent, Conlin (Wayne Morris), and a Scotland Yard Detective, Mac (Bruce Seton). Conlin is given the more active role of posing as an efficiency expert to uncover how a counterfeit currency smuggling gang is using a transatlantic airline. The murderous hidden villain is revealed as foreign-accented Fraser (Anton Diffring), who has been exploiting the vulnerability of an otherwise respectable radio operator who is merely trying to better himself. The film belongs to a genre that displays a distinctly middle-class sensibility and in which the restoration of order is through individuals who have personal investment in the achievement of 'justice'. In *Undercover Girl*, for instance, a magazine reporter (Paul Carpenter) investigating the murder of his brother-in-law discovers an elaborate blackmail and drug-peddling racket that exploits the stupid and decadent upper-classes.

There were challenges to this formulaic crime thriller, however, most notably by *Offbeat*, a film 'remarkable for its moral ambiguity and political critique' (Chibnall, 1999, p.98). Structurally it is not dissimilar to traditional undercover police films such as Tempean's *13 East Street*. There is a specific crime problem, a series of large-scale robberies, but not enough evidence. An undercover operation is set up whereby the policeman commits a crime to be given a criminal persona, in this case M.I.5 Agent Layton (William Sylvester) who becomes 'Steve Ross' with the assistance of Scotland Yard. *Offbeat* starts with the examination of a dead policeman, Layton's predecessor, so that it is clear that failure will lead to death. However, this conventional threat, that is so central to earlier films, dissipates. It becomes more of a criminal-centred heist film since Layton's brief is to study crime rather than destroy the gang, and the active learning

process results in him finding the criminal life more attractive. Thus, in terms of resolution, there is not the feel-good heroism of a threat overcome, but an anti-heroic sad ending when Scotland Yard's intervention makes Layton feel like a traitor. Thus, there is a subversion of generic conventions with to some extent the reversal of moral polarities in which the criminals have admirable qualities whilst the agents of order have conflicts usually reserved for criminal gangs. Furthermore, this is achieved not naively, but with a modernist rhetoric of self-reflexivity that explores the inadequacy of the genre (voiced through Layton's criminal girlfriend [Mai Zetterling]), to represent the 'underworld as it really is' by showing 'criminals as ordinary people trying to make a living'. This is not typical, but it is indicative of a greater diversity of the aesthetic-ideological dramatization of professional crime in British films at this time.

In summary, there is no doubt that a claim for the social realism of the British crime film during this period can be made. It is clearly evident in the location shooting of films such as *The Heart Within*, *A Place to Go* or *Face of a Stranger*, and even in the understated acting style of Anthony Quayle in the Hollywood *noir* of *The Challenge*. Crime films such as *Offbeat* and *The Informers* are also realistic in addressing contemporaneous changes in underworld organization and for documenting a society in transition. However, this is just one contribution to a diverse British crime cinema at this time.

Firstly, there was a shift to films that are more criminal-centred. There were less law enforcement or investigation narratives, but this informs us less about film realism and more about the early fifties as a circumspect and inhibited period of crime film-making in Britain. Police films became more conflicted in their representation of law and order

so that the traditional melodramatic struggle of police and criminal was disrupted, although crime was still conventionally functioning as the eruption of a murderous threat. However, films such as *Hell is a City* can be seen as being more realistic in the sense that they seem to recognize the inadequacy of previous films to represent accurately the police and crime. But it must be remembered that many investigation thrillers were hardly affected by the same realist imperatives as the police film.

Heist films were generally not realistic about contemporary crime, but they did dramatize contemporary social troubles, as did aftermath films where the function of crime was to help reveal the morality of 'easy money'. Anxieties about affluence and its impact on personal relationships were also a feature of the generic organization of victim-offender and more offender-centred films, though they are rarely about the realism of the underworld. Where underworld subjects such as prostitution racketeering are addressed, one finds the melodramatic mode is influential, and victimization thrillers and crime melodramas are realistic in their referencing of contemporary anxieties and instabilities, but crime still often functions traditionally as a dangerous threat to be overcome.

In response to the suggestion that there was the emergence of a coherent and sophisticated underworld film genre in this period, the presence of more criminal-centred films brings not coherence but diversity of underworld and professional crime representation to the extent that it is difficult to produce definitive categories or straightforward summaries. On the one hand, there were distinctive formulaic films such as the heist thriller or the aftermath film, but on the other there were more hybrid films that are thrillers in the melodramatic mode or crime melodramas dramatizing

victimization, victim-offender conflicts and offender criminalization. Thus, as well as the more coherent representation of the cultural verisimilitude of the contemporary underworld, there was the continuing tradition of melodramatic rhetoric. Furthermore, films such as *Offbeat* or *Strongroom* exemplify the diversity of the crime film under the impulse of creative experimentation and reflexivity about conventions, perhaps because of the degree of artistic control of independent production and because of a generic form winding down (Chibnall, 1999, p.98) as the international market for the B film began to recede. Genre specialists such as Basil Dearden and Ken Hughes, for instance, were directors who continued to work as the studio system adapted to more one-off independent production during the 1950s. The formal changes in film texts are evident in such stylistic developments as pre-titles sequences, the introduction of modernity into the graphic design of titles sequences, and the use of more diverse music, such as jazz, on the soundtrack.¹⁶ As well as a period of social realism, then, this was also a baroque period of generic hybridity in which the updating of realism or the impact of television were just some of the influences that acted upon the crime genre.

8.3 Discourses of crime

In this period there were fewer law enforcement narratives, such as those concerning the relationship between the agencies of the state and offenders, than during the first years of the fifties. There were also fewer thrillers involving conspiracies such as counterfeiting, although drugs in the traditional form of dope and cocaine continued to be regularly represented. In addition to the more customary forms of underworld racketeering such as vice and protection, there was also a greater variety of organized

¹⁶ See for example, the pre-titles sequences in *Never Let Go*, *Payroll* and *He Who Rides a Tiger*, the use of lower-case lettering in the titles sequences of *The Heart Within* and *Jungle Street*, and jazz music in *The Criminal*, *The Secret Partner*, and *Nowhere to Go*.

criminality featured in British films at this time, such as fight fixing in Merton Park's *On the Run* (1963) or jukebox rackets in Danziger's *Gang War* (1962). Importantly, there was also more 'white collar' crime, such as embezzlement and fraud. Taken together, there was a significant shift away from the more sensational generic fiction of the conventional crime film to the wider cultural verisimilitude of the presentation of a more criminogenic society. However, what textual evidence is there to suggest that the British crime film in this period contributed to or reflected the emergence of law and order as a major issue that began to enter political discourse in the early sixties?

In police films and other films in which police are present, there was both a significant change in representation and in law and order discourse. This was not universal since films such as *Gideon's Day* were more traditional. Despite the presence of corruption, it is a film that has no great sense of either anxiety about policing or an escalation in the threat of crime. Gideon is a capable patriarch who lacks sufficient hours in his day to be the perfect husband and father, but public service is heroically prioritised to overcome perpetual crime. *Hell is a City*, however, revises this stereotype since Martineau is presented as a more troubled British copper who is neither a real nor a symbolic father. The film updated its 'cops and robbers' melodrama so that moral certainties were replaced by uncertainty about violent crime and the modernizing state's persistence with capital punishment.

The Informers, by contrast, has a more direct address to troubling law and order discourses. Released after the Royal Commission report on policing, its version of cops and robbers contains a similar moral ambivalence to *Hell is a City* (Chibnall, 1999, pp.104-105), but this is expressed, as established earlier, in rather melodramatic terms.

There is an indignant tone to the conflict that uncovers Leon Sale, releases vigilantism and demands justice. There is still significant moral contrast between the troubled police force and the forces of disorder: the confident style of spiv villain Bertie Hoyle (Derren Nesbitt), ex-commando Sale's masochistic scheme to live in poverty to avoid suspicion, and the sadistic murder of the informant. But, *The Informers* does portray a police force in methodological confusion whose effect is murder and a demand for justice. Whereas *Hell is a City* has a preoccupation with modernizing the representation of the police within its generic conventions, *The Informers* is much more about voicing unease about contemporary law and order.

However, *Tomorrow at Ten* is even more reactionary because its sensational dramatization of a new type of criminal, involved in a rationally economic crime (kidnapping) that was unknown in Britain until the next decade, moves one to feel a need for the kind of tough British policeman that was emerging as a potent replacement for the fatherly Scotland Yard man.¹⁷ Inspector Parnell provides a confident perspective on the underworld. His positivist criminological perspective sees crime in predominantly cultural but also psychological terms, rather than through the more traditional conception of it as mysterious and unexplained 'other'. 'Crooks are lazy bastards, that's why they're crooks', he reasons. He sees them as unreasonable people with different standards to himself, so he uses forceful interrogation techniques to make them cooperate. However, Marlow challenges the limits of his understanding as a representative of a new form of criminality. The kidnapper does not rely on the 'old methods' of subterfuge, but delivers his ransom demands in person. He is a 'damaged' criminal whose behaviour is shown to be the result of bad, and not just absent,

¹⁷ Kidnapping in modern Britain began in January 1970 when Mrs Mackay was taken for ransom by the Hossein brothers.

parenting. He has been fobbed off with token affection by a couple that run an after-hours drinking club. He then uses their token, a childhood toy golliwog, to conceal the bomb that he gives to the kidnapped boy. He uses his own fetish to try to destroy the child (himself).¹⁸

The tough British policeman type also appeared as a background character, for instance in *The Challenge* and *Jungle Street*. In *The Challenge*, D.S. Gittens (Edward Judd), a Special Branch officer, wants to smash a gang of project thieves. As an indigenous transposition from American *noir*, Gittens has declared war on crime. He advocates the tactics of General Rommel: 'kick 'em in the teeth and then kick 'em again'. His colleague, D.S. Willis (Dermot Walsh) warns him to stick to 'normal police methods', but he goes ahead anyway with propaganda and violence (beating up a suspect held down by other officers). However, this all seems to speak more to the world of the thriller than currently circulating discourses about crime and policing.

In *Jungle Street*, however, there is more sense of a real crime problem being addressed by the need for toughness. Hardened policeman, Inspector Bowden (Martin Sterndale), investigating the mugging and murder of a pensioner, 'leans' on known criminals, eliciting their respect as a determined, 'hard copper', but he sees his patrol as a 'ride through the jungle' and bemoans how crime is now committed by 'anyone at all', when once it was done by a 'name on a card'. His suspect is one of his 'names', Joe Lucas (Brian Weske), who helps him capture David McCallum's delinquent, but unlike *The Blue Lamp*'s communal expulsion, this representative of the underworld cooperates out of self-interest when he can no longer extract money from the youth for carrying the suspicion for the crime.

¹⁸ In the crime genre, psychological explanations had been popularised by Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960).

However, *The Frightened City* went further by going beyond the idea that it is enough to be tough. The move towards the syndication of crime depicted in the film is thought of as unBritish and deviantly other. Newspaper headlines are shown in the film referring to 'Chicago comes to London' and 'Gunfight at the Soho Corral'. Sayers, another tough cop played by John Gregson, sees the criminal mind as being impenetrable, 'the dark side of the moon'. It can be recalled that the melodrama in this film works to create victimization and to uncover the real villain who seems to be beyond justice so that there is a 'justice gap' and this justice gap is Sayers' particular concern. In addition to the need for tougher policing, he diagnoses that the scales of justice are tilted in the wrong direction and prescribes the need for laws that are 'designed to catch villains, not hamper the police'. Sayers' anxiety is caused by the failure of the justice system to keep pace with the modernity of crime, but his fantasy of control celebrates faith in traditional justice and a classical criminological perspective of criminals as a race apart ('scum').

Thus, the police film, and the representation of police in film could operate as an outlet for sensitivities about the perception of law and order problems, but not always. *He Who Rides a Tiger*, for instance, has many elements that would usually suggest a reactionary response to unease about law and order. For example, the police are compromised by corruption and Superintendent Taylor (Paul Rogers) describes the cat burglar as a 'dangerous, vicious, ruthless, useless man'. However, this deviancy does not tally with the portrait of the professional criminal presented in the rest of the film and there is no melodramatic victimization or feel-good revelation of villainy typical of more anxious discourses about law and order.

Investigation thrillers also continued to present the dangerous threat of crime, although the genre was in decline so that the depiction of the conspiratorial nature of crime was declining. The genre tended neither to create a sense of crime being out of control nor to dramatize a contemporary crime problem or law and order discourses. In B films such as *Danger by My Side* there is no desire to address the reputation or conventionality of the police represented in the film by the calm assurance and authority of pipe-smoking Inspector Willoughby (Anthony Oliver) of Scotland Yard. In *The Crooked Sky* the fantasy of control encoded in the defeat of the highly fictionalised counterfeiting racket is the routine exercise of tough American heroism and Scotland Yard efficiency. *Undercover Girl* is more convincingly set in the verisimilitude of investigative crime reporting and exposés of Soho deviancy, but its personalization of the quest for justice is a reactionary generic trait leading back at least to A films such as *Dancing With Crime* and *Brighton Rock*.

The investigation film that most obviously subverts the routine and reactionary elements of the thriller is *Offbeat*. Its generic coherence dissolves through an attempt to confront the traditional function of professional crime as an inexplicable threat since the fact that a policeman has been murdered gets 'forgotten'. Conventionally, it establishes a serious threat, a new type of organized and trained criminal without a record. To Scotland Yard it is a war on crime that requires 'cloak and dagger', hence the involvement of an undercover secret service agent 'Steve Ross'. However, the agent finds the criminals not to be subversives, but 'just people trying to make a living dishonestly'. This is an unexpected equivalence of legitimate and illegitimate work in a period in which social change was otherwise producing crime films that show evidence of troubling law and order discourses. To this exception one could also add *The*

Criminal since it was not anxious about crime but analytical of crime as a reproduction of the social system.

In some more criminal-centred films, however, there was a surprising lack of direct address to discourses about crime. Robbery films, for instance, such as heist and aftermath films, show concern for social tensions other than about crime or remain more truthful to the conventions of genre than the demands of social realism. *Calculated Risk*, for example, portrays a more convincingly understated contemporary criminal milieu than most heist films, but its dramatic failure due to bad luck or just deserts conforms to the doomed trajectory of generic verisimilitude and conventional morality. *The League of Gentlemen*, *A Prize of Arms* and *Piccadilly Third Stop* typically dramatize instabilities such as troubled masculinity, social malaise, affluence and social mobility rather than the threat of crime.

Payroll is a heist film set in the verisimilitude of contemporary project crime, but even here the doomed failure and self-destruction of the gang is figured with more concern for its generic world than for actual law enforcement.¹⁹ The security van's latest technological safety features, for instance, prove to be inadequate against the robbers' counter measures. Concerns about justice, although not as developed as in *The Frightened City*, are played out through the character of the widowed wife of the van driver, Jackie Parker (Billie Whitelaw), who complains that jail won't be enough for the offenders. In the last scene, she points a gun at the gang's leader, Johnny Mellors (Michael Craig), but her desire for vengeance rather than justice, against the council of the police, is resolved anyway by conventional natural justice before she can pull the

¹⁹ The threat to the movement of cash and the need for extra security, along with the depiction of violent robbery, was realistically presented and this can be interpreted as reflecting concerns about an escalating crime problem.

trigger.²⁰ A similar kind of vengeance, that might represent a societal drive for punishment, drives crime reporter Jack Moir when he is framed by criminals in *Impact*. His response is to use torture by locking them in cold storage to elicit a confession. There is a sense of anxiety here about the changing nature of organized crime as it moves into legal gambling and of criminals being beyond the law since 'nothing sticks' to 'The Duke'.

Like the heist films, aftermath films are often generically conventional (the gang is conflicted and self-destructs, the villain is accidentally killed as an act of natural justice) and not very discursive about contemporary crime, but dramatize crime as the pressurized acquisition of money. In *Touch of Death*, for instance, the criminals are desperate for money to get on in a competitive world. The film does have a minor reference to the problem of crime when a witness blames the television for putting 'ideas into their heads', but typically the pressures of affluence are used to account for the criminalization of young men such as Len in *Touch of Death* or Frankie in *The Man in the Back Seat* to the extent that one suspects that the real anxiety is not about crime itself but the instability of the consumer society, social mobility and the expectations of affluence. This is particularly noticeable in *Strongroom* in which the car breakers become criminalized because they want to become car salesmen, not scavengers, but something with more status.

Thus, in summary, there is evidence of anxieties about crime and troubling law and order discourses, particularly in the representation of the police, but also emerging in other forms of crime thrillers and melodramas through, for instance, the personalization of the pursuit of justice or victimization more generally. A heightened sense of deviancy

²⁰ He falls overboard and is run over by the boat.

is present, for example, in the melodramatization of vice racketeering at this time. In *The Shakedown*, as in *The Frightened City*, the police describe the gangsters as 'scum', and in *The Flesh is Weak*, as in *Jungle Street*, the city is a 'jungle' inhabited in this case by 'reptiles'. In response, the fantasy of control was sometimes reactionary, such as in the vigilantism of the London cabbies in *Passport to Shame*. Other films, however, were untouched by any contemporary law and order discourses. *Pit of Darkness*, for example, presents the conventional dangerous threat of crime thwarted by a middle-class hero that was the traditional fantasy of control throughout the 1950s. Rather differently, in *Face of a Stranger* the dystopian vision of greed, murder and betrayal through the over-investment in money is realistically presented but the film is not very revealing about contemporary crime.

However, although there were several films that were informed by anxiety about crime and law and order, there were many more films in which crime functioned not to dramatize the verisimilitude of crime, but other social tensions and anxieties for which criminality becomes a symptom: class mobility in *No Road Back*, generational conflicts in *Dangerous Afternoon*, and lack of care and control and the cultural dissonance of divorce in *The Break(down)*. Often one senses the balmy relief of social tensions at work in these films: the undermining of non-conformity and rebellion in *The Painted Smile*, and, in *Rag Doll*, of youth culture, and the promotion of the stability of work in response to the 'problem' of immigration in *The Heart Within*. A key early example is *Nowhere to Go* whose cultural verisimilitude is not about troubling law and order so much as an individualism that seems difficult to contain and so signals the fragmentation of postwar community that *The Blue Lamp* tried to promote.

This assuaging of the tensions of the affluent society and the criminal perversion of 'easy money' is particularly well illustrated a Butcher's B film, *The Hi-Jackers* (1963). This victimization thriller has none of the reactionary anxieties of films such as *Tomorrow at Ten*, but instead it deals with a crime problem through a fantasy of restraint. Terry (Anthony Booth) is the victim of the growing crime of lorry hijacking which the police explain is easier than 'wage snatches'. The 'crew' assembled for the robbery mirrors the hierarchical structure of society with an idealized leader, Jack Carter (Derek Francis), who enforces rational, anti-violent methods. 'It's not sound economics', he suggests, to receive a more severe sentence for using violence. Similarly, Terry is equally restrained since he is very philosophical about the loss of his livelihood, unlike John Cummings (Richard Todd) in Independent Artists' A film *Never Let Go*, which is a more melodramatic response to the victimization of crime. Like *Strongroom*, *Never Let Go* dramatizes the consequences of 'pipe dreams', the destructive forces of the pursuit of success through business, consumerism and affluence through the melodramatic conflict between perverted legitimate business (the garage that sells stolen cars) and the desperate victim who won't let go of his path to success (his stolen car), whilst the victim's wife undermines his dream of a 'cottage in the country' by showing him the higher importance of love. In different ways, then, these are films that deal with the instabilities of the 'things some people will do for money'.

Nevertheless, in the process of representing social tensions through criminal perversion, society is shown to be participating more widely in crime and social change manifests as criminal deviancy. This could take many generic forms, as outlined in the previous section, but there were in this period new spaces or contexts that expanded the

representation of crime beyond the generic verisimilitude of the investigation thriller or the action melodrama of the earlier part of the fifties. A suburban housewife dealing in cocaine in *Dilemma*, for instance, is the basis for dramatizing how traditional middle-class gender relations were being disturbed by the uncertainty of affluence acting upon the certainty of social background. At the beginning of this period, *Hell Drivers* depicts a new arena for criminal activity, the competitive individualism and graft in a corrupt construction industry, and towards the end, *The Small World of Sammy Lee* takes a traditional site of crime, Soho, not to melodramatize anxiety about law and order, but to present the criminal as a constituent in a microcosm of individual endeavour.

8.4 Discourses of masculinity

As we have seen, in the early 1950s, the two main forms of heroism were the routine, fatherly discipline and control of middle-class authority and the less class-bound transatlantic testing of male agency and worth. This continued in B films starring American actors, such as *The Crooked Sky*, *Undercover Girl* and *The Man from Tangier*, and in victimization thrillers such as *Pit of Darkness* and *Impact*. However, by the late 1950s, this tradition was in decline and was challenged by more diverse representations of masculinity. Furthermore, although the crime film was acknowledging changes in society and underworld organization, it still continued to be a genre that was a site for the representation of patriarchal anxieties and instabilities in gender relations.

One reason for change was the decline in the use of American actors in the crime film, so that the opportunity was given to a 'new breed of British actor' (Murphy, 1992, p.212) to develop more prominent roles. These included William Lucas (*Payroll*, *Touch*

of *Death, Calculated Risk* and *The Marked One* [1963]), Kenneth Cope (*Naked Fury, Jungle Street* and *Tomorrow at Ten*), Derren Nesbitt (*The Man in the Back Seat, Strongroom* and *The Informers*), and Tom Bell (*Payroll, A Prize of Arms* and *He Who Rides a Tiger*). There was also the presence of pop musicians such as Jess Conrad (*Rag Doll*), Adam Faith (*Never Let Go*), and Mike Sarne (*A Place to Go*). However, the key male actor of the period in the crime film was Stanley Baker whose persona was able to carry the desire to question the moral clarity between policeman and criminal and whose roles 'led the way for the dominant anti-heroes of the 1960s, particularly James Bond' (Spicer, 1999, p.91).

Part of this characterization involved the greater sexualization of masculinity and more overtly sexual content than in previous postwar crime films. In earlier periods, the mode of understated passion was common and women tended to be romantically linked to the hero or given the role of helping the damaged victim-hero back to recovery. In *Hell Drivers, Hell is a City* and *The Criminal*, however, women are drawn to Baker's charismatic masculinity, as an ex-convict, criminal and policeman. The charismatic male criminal appears in many crime films during this period, for instance, played by Michael Craig in *Payroll*, Terence Morgan in *Piccadilly Third Stop*, William Lucas in *The Break*, and Jess Conrad in *Rag Doll*. Nevertheless, the prowess and potency of the charismatic anti-hero did not remain completely unchallenged. Tom Bell's Rayston, in *He Who Rides a Tiger*, is used to purchasing the affection of women, but he can't buy Joanne's independence since she is looking for a father for her illegitimate son more than just a lover.

Whilst male sexuality in crime cinema was to some extent liberated from the constraint of middle-class taste and decency represented by the paternalistic authority of earlier crime films, female desire continued to be subject to regulatory pressures and problematized as 'the troublesome symptom of criminality' in crime melodramas such as *The Flesh is Weak* and *Passport to Shame* (Chadder, 1999). This was a transition of a deepening of masculinist perspectives in a decade in which British films were 'far more prescriptive towards women than they had been in the 1950s' (Harper, 2000, p.102). However, male sexuality also came under similar prescription through the regulation of marriage or work. In *The Painted Smile* and *The Heart Within*, for example, anxiety about unregulated male sexuality, in the context of youthful rebellion and immigration, respectively, is dramatized as lack of self-restraint leading to victimization by crime. Furthermore, in relation to the symbolic challenges of women to the legitimacy of patriarchy under the transformation of the consumer society, women continued to be represented not just as symptoms of criminality but crime itself was shown to be symptomatic of troublesome women.

At one level this emerged in the generic verisimilitude of *noir* melodrama dramatizing instabilities within gender relations in films such as *The Gentle Trap*, *The Challenge* or *Face of a Stranger*, through, for instance, the corrupt machinations of 'material girls'. In *The Gentle Trap*, Johnny Ryan only helps an old professional thief for 'one last job' because he wants to spend the money on the good time girl who plans to double-cross him. According to Johnny, she is 'A girl in love...with money. The kind of money a locksmith doesn't cart home'. On the run, he meets the 'nice girl' (Felicity Young) that he has been advised to find, the pure woman who 'hasn't missed the last train home' and who helps him evade the gang who want the stolen jewels.

Other films, however, do address a greater sense of masculine disquiet. The criminalization of ex-servicemen through a sense of masculine malaise and problematic relationships with women continued to be a persistent theme. In *The League of Gentlemen*, for instance, the ex-officers now re-bonded in crime also share motivational circumstances that originate from unsatisfactory personal relationships with women. Porthill (Bryan Forbes) is kept by an older and richer woman. Weaver (Norman Bird) is trapped in an oppressive suburban household with his wife, father-in-law and the television. The leader of the gang himself, Hyde (Jack Hawkins), has been made redundant and is separated from his wife. Whereas in Dearden's earlier *The Ship That Died of Shame* Randall's wife stands for wartime moral virtues that have been lost or are under threat in peacetime, women in *The League of Gentlemen* are presented as one of the causes of male disillusionment with postwar culture.

However, not every ex-serviceman's postwar crisis was presented as a breakdown in relationships with women. In *A Prize of Arms*, women play no part in Turpin's drive for recompense. In fact, women are totally excluded from Turpin as his two fellow ex-servicemen use their Army skills, not as a way of recovering wartime purpose, but for financial gain.²¹ Turpin is driven by a sense of injustice and an inability to relax and forget who he was and his enmity seems to be driven by class prejudice. There is, then, a clear contrast between this film and *The League of Gentlemen* in terms of class, masculinity, criminalization and social change. Whereas Jack Hawkins' criminalization, as a middle-class professional in mid-life crisis, can clearly be attributed to feelings of emasculation salved by a nostalgia for wartime service, Stanley Baker's criminalization,

²¹ Only Turpin's personal motivation for the robbery is elaborated in any detail. In the early scenes on the night before their assault on the Army camp payroll, Turpin's conversation reveals how he was left with 'Just three holes on each shoulder where the pips used to be' after a dishonourable discharge for black marketeering in Germany after the war.

as a lower-class tough guy in a state of anger, results from a feeling of discrimination to be redressed at a time of national vulnerability to post-colonial conflict.

These differences are repeated across a number of films. Whereas the criminalization of middle-class men involves the dramatization of concerns about loss of status, the dread of emasculation or concerns about relationships within marriage, similar processes involving working-class men tend to be about loss of control, of being stuck and pursuing opportunities of advancement, independence, or in Turpin's case, of grievance.

In *Payroll*, an example of the expression of middle-class discomfort, Dennis (William Lucas), is an accountant who becomes the inside man for the pay snatch. Katie (Francoise Prevost), his emasculating wife, drives her husband into crime with complaints about his stalled career and their consequent lowly status. She is impatient for him to provide her with money so that she can 'Spend it! Spend it!'. Although she is attracted to the charismatic criminal Johnny Mellors whom she regards as a 'real man', it is the money she really covets. After the robbery, she abandons her husband, who has crumbled with guilt, and pursues Mellors and the stolen money.

In *The Secret Partner* and *The Running Man* businessmen display the insecurities of successful masculine provision. In both films their wives suffer as a result of their husbands' over-investment in money reducing them to feeling like 'whores'. For example, John Brent in *The Secret Partner* robs the shipping company where he works in order to provide his wife with a suitcase full of money. Her rejection of the money forces him to return it anonymously to the police who suspect his guilt. 'She wanted her freedom', he explains to the understanding Scotland Yard man (Bernard Lee) on his last

case. Publicly, the intervention of the law proves unnecessary, but at least they are in place, whereas privately, the 'laws' of gender relationships seem to be in disrepute.

Whilst middle-class men who become criminalized do so in the context of dysfunctional personal relationships, working-class men who become criminalized are to a greater extent escaping the ascription that defines their place in the world. For instance, Frankie, in *The Man in the Back Seat*, becomes involved in crime mainly to help his 'mate', however, a more detailed motivation emerges in the scenes at his house. In argumentative exchanges between Frankie and his wife, he explains that he committed the robbery so that she 'could have given up work' and they 'could have got out of this stinking basement'. In *A Place to Go*, factory worker Ricky Flint wants a life of his own, 'to be independent', and so he decides crime will be his one-off escape route out of his crowded house and his reproduction as his father locked in marriage and work.

Similarly, mechanic Terry Collins in *Jungle Street* also wants to avoid turning into his father who mocks him because he 'wants to better himself'. The tearaway rows with his father about work. The son does not want to be like him, a 'potato lugger' who spends all his money on beer. The mother is hoping for a win on the 'Treble Chance'. There is also melodrama concerned with affluence and gender relations, such as Terry and Johnny Calvert (Kenneth Cope), who are both motivated to rob secure relationships with women. The reduction of sexual relationships to financial transactions is very noticeable. This is because of the proximity of the action to the 'Adam and Eve Club' where gender relations are starkly financial. The 'punters' pay to watch the strippers,

but the owner, Jacko Fielding (John Chandos) runs his own personal 'bird' market - 'I buy and sell 'em', he tells Terry.

Tread Softly Stranger also dramatizes a criminal perversion of social and sexual mobility. Fusing New Wave realism with *noir* melodrama, the story revolves around two brothers, Johnny (George Baker) and Dave (Terence Morgan) who are sexually attracted to Calico (Diana Dors). Their problems stem from work and money. Calico's job at a dance club is low-paid. Johnny shirks from work and prefers to earn easier money from gambling. It provides him with a bachelor lifestyle in London, but recent gambling debts have forced him back home to lie low with his brother in a Northern industrial town. Dave works as a wages clerk at a factory and is motivated to steal from the firm to buy love from Calico. Dave begins to panic when the auditors are due and will discover the missing money. Once the idea of robbing the safe to hide the shortfall is jokingly raised by Johnny, it strikes Dave and Calico that it is the solution to all their monetary and sexual problems. Calico then takes the lead in persuading the men to go through with the plan, taunting Johnny as a coward and encouraging the nervous Dave. Although misfortune contributes to their fate, it is largely Calico's predatory and selfish manipulation of the men that is to blame for their downfall. She pushes Dave into the robbery, forcing a gun upon him for courage, the gun that delivers the men to the police for the murder of the nightwatchman.

As his more confident and assertive brother observes, Calico has one hand on Dave's knee and the other in his pocket, she has got him 'by the short hairs'. In a potent image Johnny burns the stolen cash because it will incriminate them, but it also releases them from the matriarchal grip of the acquisitive Calico. The brothers' abuse of money is

contrasted with the normative relationship of the factory worker Paddy Ryan (Patrick Allen), who is engaged to another employee, Sylvia (Jane Griffiths). Unlike Johnny, Paddy is trying to make money the 'hard way', working night shifts and staying in to save up to get married. Sylvia agrees with what she calls his 'old-fashioned idea' that he doesn't want her to work once they are married. Paddy is also the son of the murdered watchman and in defence of his disrupted family and the dominant social order it represents he has the narrative function of pursuing the two men until their capture. Dave and Johnny's pursuit of 'easier money' whether through criminalization or gambling and Calico's predatory materialism is a perversion of the perfectly respectable working-class ambition to achieve independence through savings and marriage reflecting uneasiness about changing patterns of work and gender relationships and the destabilizing effects of the expectations of affluence

8.5 Summary

The significant change in discourses of masculinity in the late fifties and early sixties is that both the customary fatherly discipline of the middle-class, middle-aged professional and the heroism of action melodrama featuring American actors began to decline at this time to be replaced by more varied masculinities. The crime film continued to be a genre that was only ostensibly about professional crime when in fact it was equally about the expression of masculine apprehension of the unsettling direction of postwar social change. The criminalization of ex-serviceman, for instance, continued to be a regular theme, as was the problematic relationship between men and troublesome women as symptom and cause of criminality. There were, however, important class configurations to criminalization. Whereas middle-class deviancy was apt to dramatize

the dread of emasculation or loss of status, working-class criminality was more likely to involve entrapment and a desire to break free. As well as being fretful, however, masculinity also became empowered when it became more sexualized and charismatic. This liberation from some of the constraints of propriety and decency challenged the middle-class meritocracy of the fifties by shifting masculine (anti-) heroism to working-class energy and ambition. The consolidation of independent production as the major duopoly concentrated on distribution and exhibition opened up access to film-making in new creative contexts resulting in films such as *The League of Gentlemen*, *Offbeat* and *A Prize of Arms* and the possibility of more control over subject matter and treatment. However, most films about professional crime continued to be made by the companies who specialized in B film production, but even this context allowed the making of key films of more personal insight, such as *The Criminal*. This was a period of continuity and closure, with the end of the black and white crime film, but above all it was a period of change. There were more visible challenges to the postwar consensus and regime of conformity through critiques of social structures that revealed tensions of modernization and a 'culture in dissolution' (Morgan, 1990). The contradictory responses of nostalgia and radical discontent were evident in films such as *The League of Gentlemen*, *Offbeat* and *The Criminal*, but many other crime films reflect doubts about the outward signs of a society in transition.

Overall there were more criminal-centred narratives than ever before and there were significant changes in the representation of law enforcement, such as a more conflicted police force, moral ambivalence and the appearance of the tough British police officer. If this was under the influence of the realist rhetoric, then it was applied unevenly since professional crime often continued to be dramatized as the eruption of a murderous

threat. Criminal-centred films were generically diverse and hybrid and most crime films did not adhere to realist aesthetics, and if they did connect with contemporary social unease and unsteadiness, it was often not with reference to law and order discourses or underworld verisimilitude, but to other markers of social tension. The underworld and organized crime were more thoroughly dramatized than ever before, but with generic diversity. It is difficult to extrapolate the generic characteristics of the gangster or underworld film in this period, but it is possible to conclude that this period was not without significant attempts to bring explanatory realism to the crime genre, but that whatever feelings were being articulated they were more often in negotiation with melodrama or expressed in a melodramatic mode.

The early sixties was also a time in which law and order emerged as a contested issue in political discourse. Films such as *The Informers*, *Jungle Street* and *The Frightened City* do adopt law and order discourses, whilst other films tended not to do so or else lacked any direct address to discourses about contemporary crime. This was not a period of great radical challenge to social organization, but there was some confrontation of conventional morality. *Offbeat*, for instance, subverts the reactionary formula of the thriller, and *The Criminal* is more concerned with analysing crime than dramatizing a contemporary crime problem. At the same time, however, there was a heightened incidence of deviancy expressed through the melodramatic mode and in the emotive language used to describe criminality. Furthermore, the presentation of a wider participation in and victimization of crime, in new spaces and contexts, when taken overall, could be seen to have made a significant contribution to an impression of a society with a law and order problem.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a consideration of the objectives and outcomes of the study through a critical review of the research and with an address to the potential for further enquiry. The study was conceived in response to the identification of a number of weaknesses in British Cinema historiography: (1) the marginal impact of genre studies on British cinema history; (2) a weak understanding of the identity of the British crime genre in critical discourse; and (3) the critical neglect of the British B film. The thesis has dealt with these problems through the creation and interpretation of new knowledge. The particular contribution of the thesis in this respect has been to establish the quantitative significance of the British crime genre in British cinema. The thesis has also examined how the dramatization of professional crime in films in the period of study engages with socio-historical change through a variety of discourses about masculinity and law and order.

The marginalization of British genre studies has been targeted by looking at professional crime films with particular reference to genre as 'aesthetic practice' (Gledhill, 2000). This has involved the analysis of the relationship between society's conventions of social reality (cultural verisimilitude) and the verisimilitude of the films' generic 'worlds' (such as the thriller) as articulated by the rhetorical modes of dramatic film (melodrama and realism). The lack of a strong sense of a British crime genre identity in critical discourse has been corrected by means of the textual analysis of

crime films as 'fixed' genres such as the thriller. This has been supported with a concern for how the narrative organization of films about professional crime is organized by the employment of the rhetorical modes of melodrama and realism.

The critical neglect of the B film has been addressed by treating the second feature as an important category alongside the A film within the industrial context of British cinema 1946-1965. In this thesis, B crime films have been given prominent consideration in terms of genre and representational discourses of crime and masculinity. Thus, new light has been shed on previously marginalized films such as *The Flamingo Affair* (1948), *No Way Back* (1949), *Assassin For Hire* (1951), *Dangerous Cargo* (1954), *The Heart Within* (1957), *Naked Fury* (1959), *Calculated Risk* (1963) and *Face of a Stranger* (1964). Similarities and differences across and within these different types of films have been established with reference to their aesthetic qualities and their discursive significance. Quantification analysis has complemented this textual analysis by identifying distinctive periods in the production of professional crime films. Crime has been established as a major category of film production between 1930 and 1985, particularly during the postwar studio years. It has also been shown that professional crime is an important thematic and a constant preoccupation in the British crime film between 1946 and 1965.

With reference to the meaning of this production, the major contribution of the study to new knowledge has been to examine discourses of crime and masculinity expressed through dramatic rhetorical modes in exemplary professional crime films, including many previously unconsidered texts, in relation to social and historical change. The research has contributed to 'post-theoretical' film studies by supporting the 'return' to

‘theories of the aesthetic’ through the study of how films mean, rather than merely what they mean (Nowell-Smith, 2000). This has been achieved with a post-structuralist approach to textual analysis in which films are grouped temporally to create meaning through their intertextuality and contextuality. Interpretation has been made, not with regard to a distinctive sub-genre of the British crime film, but with a consideration for the theme of professional crime as an important element within the British crime genre.

9.1 Genre and the discursive significance of crime and masculinity 1946-1965

The study has applied a more theoretical approach to the politics of representation and textual analysis in contrast to the more pragmatic methodology that has been typical of British cinema studies (Ashby and Higson, 2000). The more pragmatic approach to the representational analysis of film texts is perfectly capable of producing valid readings about what films mean. However, the more theoretical approach can enhance the understanding of how meaning is produced within the text and can generate textual evidence in support of interpretation. Thus, the research has demonstrated that the analysis of film texts in their social and historical context is greatly assisted by the application of genre theory as re-conceptualised by contemporary revisionists such as Altman (1999) and Gledhill (2000). In particular, the interpretation of the discursive significance of the theme of professional crime within the crime genre is supported by textual evidence of generic organization with regard to melodrama and realism as the primary rhetorical modes of crime drama in the period of study.

These rhetorical modes, along with the ‘fixed’ genres that are constructed in critical discourse, are key treatments that when analysed provide valuable insights into the discursive nature of crime films. A good illustration of this, as discussed in Chapter 8, is

the difference established between the gangster films *The Frightened City* (1961) and *The Criminal* (1960) in terms of the films' articulation of melodrama and realism. *The Frightened City* draws upon the verisimilitude of the contemporary underworld, but as gangster melodrama it places particular emphasis on the moral polarities of victimization, whereas in *The Criminal* a melodramatic plot is subjected to an analytical realism.

Specific configurations of the rhetorical modes within genre films are deployed routinely and conventionally, and this produces meaning, although conventionality can be used to different effect. The thriller, for instance, is conventionally a conservative form that privileges a very bourgeois sensibility about a criminal threat and the restoration of order. In the late forties and early fifties, the crime thriller is typically a conservative genre, particularly at the beginning of the fifties, in films that dramatize the eruption of dangerous criminal threats from conspiratorial rackets. However, the thriller genre also includes more liberal examples such as *My Brother's Keeper* (1948) and more radical interpretations such as *Offbeat* (1961).

Melodrama is also a conservative mode that involves the drawing of moral boundaries through the revelation of villainy and the pathos of victimization, such as in the dramatization of prostitution racketeering in British crime films of the late fifties and early sixties. In addition, it is the primary mode for the depiction of male heroism and suffering, and especially for the representation of crime as a symptom of other social anxieties and fears.

9.2 Genre and the aesthetic qualities of British cinema 1946-1965

Genre analysis has also been used in this thesis to describe the formal and aesthetic qualities of crime films made in postwar Britain. Crime films that dramatize professional crime between 1946 and 1965 are products of a system of hybrid generic film production within which the melodramatic mode is the most persistent and significant articulation. British crime films at this time are generically hybrid but also generally conventional. Textual analysis has also shown that, as Lovell (1997) suggests, British genre cinema is not characterised by a dichotomy of realism and fantasy between discrete films, but in fact that it consists of hybrid genre films in which realism and melodrama are interactive constituents.

Beyond the general aesthetic qualities of British cinema such as *noir* expressionism or social realism that have been established for the period of study this thesis has identified additional historical trends. The late forties is notable for 'spiv films' that depict the verisimilitude of contemporary crime and whose subject matter and treatment was a challenge to the Labour government's project of reform. However, these are very conventional fictions – realist subjects, but articulated melodramatically. In the early fifties, there is a shift to more law enforcement narratives and thrillers. But the crime melodrama, with narratives about the criminalization of amateurs, the impact of crime on individuals closely associated with criminals, and people who are victimized by crime, starts to emerge as a distinctive form for the expression of authentic social concerns. Finally, in the late fifties and early sixties, there is a greater diversity of professional crime films than in the earlier periods. Narratives also become more criminal-centred than previously and there are significant attempts to apply the realist

rhetoric to the crime genre, but this is deployed unevenly in a period still characterised by the pervasiveness of the melodramatic mode.

9.3 Crime, masculinity and the dramatization of professional crime in British film 1946-1965

In response to Chibnall and Murphy's suggestion that the British crime film is a genre with a claim to be one of social significance, the study has established that this idea has a great deal of validity. Traditionally, the crime film has been regarded as a degraded genre that lacks significance in filmic terms and one that is seen to rely too closely on the imitation of the American gangster film. This is not the case, since the research has shown that the British crime film has authenticity in terms of its engagement with cinematic and social concerns. The British crime film between 1946 and 1965 is a vehicle for dealing with the fears and anxieties of social change. In particular, depictions of professional crime during this period constitute a discursive arena for the examination of the process of postwar adjustment. The crime film is a means of expression for the discussion of social change within conventional moral and generic boundaries. Between 1946 and 1965, the dramatization of professional crime within the crime genre examines the moral contours of social change and maps new patterns onto old class and gender certainties.

9.3.1 Discourses of crime 1946-1965

Professional crime films of the late 1940s are typically not very discursive about contemporary law and order issues. However, the films do have relatively criminal-centred narratives and they represent the contemporary cultural verisimilitude of criminality such as black marketeering to a greater degree than do the films of the early

fifties. Similarly, the early fifties' films are also notable for the lack of their address to contemporary law and order discourses, apart from juvenile delinquency, the key crime problematic of the period. Instead, the films are usually more discursive about other social thematics, especially gender and class.

Films in both these periods, however, do reproduce order with a typically conservative or reactionary tone. There are some liberal qualms in films of the early fifties, such as in *The Intruder* (1953), but on the whole they express a bourgeois and paternal point of view. Films of the late forties are also not without conservative reactionary attitudes to the disorder of crime, but in contrast to those of the early fifties, there is more diversity of the engagement with law and order from other perspectives ranging from the left-liberal optimism of *My Brother's Keeper* to the pessimism about the human condition in *The Third Man* (1949) or *Nowhere to Go* (1958). In both periods also, the achievement of natural justice through the actions of public representatives or personal acquaintances of victims is a distinctive fantasy of social control. The main difference between the two periods, though, is the shift from more criminal-centred and marginal police force narratives of the late forties, to the prevalence of law enforcement narratives featuring a variety of authorities in the films of the early fifties.

The bigger shift, however, occurs in the late fifties when in the films of that period there is the emergence of an address to law and order issues that were developing at the same time in political discourses, and a greater challenge to traditional social organization and morality. The films portray a heightened sense of deviancy, for instance, through the use of the melodramatic mode and the representation of the reality of contemporary crime. Other films, though, such as *Offbeat* and *The Criminal*, are

significant for the way that they confront conventional attitudes or critique social organization.

The thesis has shown, then, that professional crime films between 1946 and 1965 are not manifestly about law and order issues, in contrast to the thematic preoccupations of the television police series (Brunsdon, 1998), and in many cases they have been shown to be vehicles for the expression of anxieties about other aspects of social change. Where they do engage with law and order issues, the general link between changing crime and crime in film in the period of study is one of a persistent reactionary reproduction of social order with fluctuating levels of realism in terms of the representation of the underworld and policing. The study, therefore, has provided further evidence to support the conclusions of Allen et al. (1997), that were founded only on the examination of plot synopses, that the reproduction of social order remained a satisfying fictional fantasy that corresponded to views about social reality until the late sixties and early seventies. However, this needs to be a tentative conclusion without the supporting evidence of contemporary audience reception of these films.

In the late forties, the wider public contact with organized crime through black marketeering is depicted, but its dramatization does not directly address discourses around the post-war crime wave and the Labour government's modernization and liberalization of law and order policy. However, as in the early fifties, there is textual evidence to show that crime films participated in a culture of social control, particularly in the denunciation of the delinquent 'cosh boy'. In the early 1950s the shift towards more law enforcement narratives and the marginalization of the verisimilitude of gangland is particularly telling in a period of acute sensitivity and circumspection about

moral conduct and enforced social consensus. Outside of the specific targeting of dangerous youth, the British crime film in the early fifties dramatizes a more general social threat through melodrama and the conspiracy of the thriller.

In the later fifties and early sixties, the cultural verisimilitude of the underworld returns once more to the professional crime film, but again the melodramatic mode is employed in the service of deviancy labelling, particularly with regard to prostitution racketeering and gangland violence. As in the prison film (Nellis, 1987; 1988), the early sixties marks a shift to a period of scepticism in which the dramatization of professional crime involves some uncertainty about the agents of social control such as the police. Overall, though, the thesis has established that the professional crime film in the period of study has a less intimate relationship with law and order discourses than do prison films with penology, especially during the fifties when British crime films are more about the agents of social control than the criminal act.

9.3.2 Discourses of masculinity 1946-1965

Distinctive patterns have been identified in relation to the construction of masculinities in British professional crime films in each of the three periods within the larger time frame of the study. However, there are also significant continuities across these historical moments. In the late forties, the dramatization of professional crime does portray heroic action and virtue as potent images of the recovery of masculine agency and worth after the war. But crime drama at this time is also particularly discursive about 'troubled' masculinity – male suffering, victimization and malaise. The theme of the maladjustment of ex-servicemen is especially prominent and it is a trope that

continued to be associated with the depiction of professional crime right through to the early sixties.

In the immediate postwar years, then, the portrayal of the social reality of professional crime involves the dramatization of gender anxieties and class instabilities. In particular at this time, predatory male sexuality is figured as an excessive characteristic of villainy that the films suggest needs to be eliminated or constrained. Crime can be seen as being symptomatic of other social anxieties such as those about masculinity within the system of gender relations.

This representation of crime as suggestive of unease and concern about more general social change continues throughout the whole period investigated in the study. In the early fifties, for example, the underworld becomes a particular focus for the corruption of gender and social relations in films that dramatize a fantasy of sexual and materialistic deviancy in need of control. Thus, crime films in the early 1950s are significantly more conservative about gender relations as well as about crime than in the late forties. There are also far more reassuring images of masculinity at this time, notably in law enforcement narratives in which the exercise of paternal discipline and control is typical, and in the performance of 'tougher' displays of heroic competence and sexual assertiveness in the 'transatlanticism' of the B crime thriller.

In the late fifties, the ostensible theme of professional crime remains equally about the expression of masculine apprehension as it does in earlier periods, in a period in which the challenges to the legitimacy of patriarchal society were advanced by the growing visibility and importance of women within postwar commodity culture and domestic relations. But masculine insecurity is represented more diversely in the late

fifties, for instance differentiated by discourses of class. Professional crime films at this time dramatize both a sense of middle-class emasculation in the face of social mobility, affluence and changing domestic relationships, and of entrapment or blocking of desire in reference to the criminalization of working-class men. They also present more sexualised and charismatic anti-heroes, most effectively played by Stanley Baker, who has no equivalent of the same standing in the late forties and the early fifties, an image of masculinity that was popular with the young working-class males who were drawn to the 'urban crime thriller' (Spicer, 1999).

The thesis has shown that historically there was a high degree of consistency in the way that the British professional crime film provided an outlet for the displacement onto crime of other social anxieties. Masculinity within the system of gender relations, more so than the crime film's engagement with contemporary law and order discourses, was a particular emphasis of this dislocation process. This displacement runs from the immediate postwar maladjustment of ex-servicemen through to the entrenchment of consumer culture and the destabilization of traditional gender and class structures and wider moral authority in the first two decades of the postwar settlement.

The study has provided further evidence about the relationship between British cinema and the 'crisis in masculinity'. The dramatization of professional crime in film indicates a very different response to the destabilization of postwar gender relations than that seen in the war film and the comedy in the fifties (Geraghty, 2000). Whereas the comedy and war film offer reassuring and secure male hierarchies, the crime film uses the crossing of moral boundaries through narratives of criminalization and victimization

to express insecurities related to social change to offer a distinctive and defensive resistance to change under the patriarchal system (Connell, 1985).

If crime fiction ‘offers a particular definition of what masculinity is’ (Palmer, 1991, p.152), then professional crime films between 1946 and 1965 offer fragile and vulnerable masculine identities subject to the threat of blocked desire, entrapment and emasculation and in need of reparation through the recovery of agency, the heroic action of male melodrama. The thesis has demonstrated that the professional crime film in the period of study does not offer a destabilizing construction of masculine identities tied to the construction of an ‘alternative national identity’ (Richards, 1998, p.146). In fact, the dramatization of professional crime in British film in the period of study is part of a mainstream cultural arena in which there is the construction of competing masculine identities that are formed in relation to the disruptions and transformations of patriarchy within the system of gender relations.

9.4 Future work

The proposals raised here for further work are conceived in two distinct but related aspects. First, to extend the concerns of the present study, and second to consider other issues relating to the research, but which were purposely excluded from its scope. For instance, the concern for ‘theories of the aesthetic’ within the present study was deliberately limited to an investigation of the generic qualities of professional crime films. However, the aesthetics of film involve a whole range of other attributes – the pleasure and displeasure of texts (formally and discursively) – that make them significant, and this should be considered in relation to establishing a more thorough understanding of how and what films mean.

The study recognised (in Chapter 5) the validity of the suggestion that a complete consideration of the representation of crime would require looking at crime across as well as within genres (Allen et al., 1997, pp.97-98), and so this is obviously an important area for future investigation that would build on the findings of the thesis. Among genres other than crime, the comedy film would provide a useful comparison between the treatment of crime in the comedic and dramatic modes. The comedy was in quantification terms the leading genre of British film production between 1946 and 1965 after the crime film. Examination of the 'crime comedy' could take place in relation to the comedy genre as a whole and to the crime film. The aim of this enquiry would be to find correlations, consonances and disagreements in the treatment of the theme of professional crime.

Another way to extend the findings of the present study would be with reference to other types of crime content, and in this context a case could be made for the need to address the neglect of the murder film in British genre studies. The complementarity of quantification and textual analyses would again be a relevant approach that could be used to establish the trends of murder content within and across genres. A wider enquiry might be aimed at establishing a quantification analysis of all different kinds of crime content and their historical trends that could be combined with textual analysis to achieve a more complete understanding of the significance of crime within the particular period of study. The crime genre is also a major category in different media and future enquiry could be directed to the intertextuality of crime fiction across media forms.

The present research used quantification analysis to establish crime as a major category of British film production between 1946 and 1965 and the patterns of first, co- and second feature professional crime films within that period. However, the scope of the study was intentionally limited in relation to the full significance of this industrial context. The research, for example, did not seek to describe or account for different dramatizations of professional crime between A and B crime films and it did not attempt to compare, in a systematic way, the crime films of different production companies in terms of genre or representational discourses. These are all worthwhile enquiries for future study.

More work is also needed to address the industrial context of the crime film in the postwar period. Testimonies of B crime film-makers, such as Robert Baker, Francis Searle and Lewis Gilbert, suggest that adherence to 'the market' was the main imperative on the kinds of films that they were able to make, but further investigation is needed to examine why the crime film was so quantitatively important in the postwar period. Clearly, 'the market' needs detailed unpicking as an explanation. Future study needs to produce more histories of British minor studios and distribution and production companies, studies of the personnel involved and seek greater access to previously unavailable films. The enquiry should not only examine the crime film as an industrial strategy of production, but also as a product of intricate and particular relationships of production, distribution and exhibition in which the boundaries between first, second and co-features could be quite fluid. The use of comparative studies of the circulation of crime films in the context of their distribution and exhibition would be especially useful to a consideration of why so many crime films were made and what they might signify in different 'markets'.

APPENDIX I. FILMOGRAPHY 1946-1965.

ABBREVIATIONS

ABPC: Associated British Picture Corporation

BLPA: British Lion Production Assets

Title (Year), Running time, d. Director, p. Producer (Production company), sc. Screenwriter, w. With. Crime interest.

Act of Murder (1964), 62m, d. Alan Bridges, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Lewis Davidson, w. John Carson, Anthony Bate. Confidence tricking.

The Adventures of PC 49 - The Case of the Guardian Angel (1949), 67m, d. Godfrey Grayson, p. Anthony Hinds (Exclusive-Hammer), sc. Alan Stranks/Vernon Harris, w. Hugh Latimer, Patricia Cutts. Lorry hijacking.

Ambush in Leopard Street (1962), 60m, d. J. Henry Piperno, p. Bill Luckwell/Jock MacGregor (Bill and Michael Luckwell), sc. Bernard Spicer/Ahmed Faroughty, w. James Kenney, Michael Brennan. Robbery.

Another Man's Poison (1951), 89m, d. Irving Rapper, p. Daniel Angel/Douglas Fairbanks Jr. (Daniel Angel), sc. Val Guest, w. Bette Davis, Gary Merrill. Bank robbery.

Appointment With Crime (1946), 97m, d. John Harlow, p. Louis H. Jackson (British National), sc. Michael Leighton/Vernon Sewell, w. William Hartnell, Robert Beatty. Jewel robbery.

Assassin For Hire (1951), 67m, d. Michael McCarthy, p. Julian Wintle (Merton Park), sc. Rex Rienits, w. Sydney Tafler, Ronald Howard. Professional killing.

Assignment Redhead (1956), 79m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. W. G. Chalmers (Butcher's), sc. Maclean Rogers, w. Richard Denning, Carole Matthews. Hidden counterfeit Nazi dollars.

Attempt to Kill (1961), 57m, d. Royston Morley, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Richard Harris, w. Derek Farr, Tony Wright. Confidence tricking.

Backfire! (1962), 59m, d. Paul Almond, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Robert Stewart, w. Alfred Burke, Zena Marshall. Arson fraud.

Bait (1950), 73m, d. Frank Richardson, (Advance), sc. Mary Bendetta/Francis Miller, w. Diana Napier, John Bentley. Jewel theft.

The Bank Raiders (1958), 60m, d. Maxwell Munden, p. Geoffrey Goodhart (Film Workshop), sc. Brandon Fleming, w. Peter Reynolds, Sandra Dorne. Bank robbery.

Barbados Quest (1955), 70m, d. Bernard Knowles, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman

- (Cipa), sc. Kenneth R. Hayles, w. Tom Conway, Delphi Lawrence. Private investigator and forgery.
- Beautiful Stranger* (1954), 89m, d. David Miller, p. Maxwell Setton/John R. Sloan (Marksman), sc. Robert Westerby/Carl Nystrom, w. Ginger Rogers, Stanley Baker. Forgery, Cannes.
- Behind the Headlines* (1953), 46m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. Maclean Rogers (E. J. Fancey), w. Gilbert Harding, John Fitzgerald. Lorry theft.
- The Big Chance* (1957), 61m, d. Peter Graham Scott, p. John Temple-Smith (Major), sc. Peter Graham Scott, w. Adrienne Corri, William Russell. Embezzlement.
- Black Memory* (1947), 73m, d. Oswald Mitchell, p. Gilbert Church (Bushey), sc. John Gilling, w. Michael Atkinson, Myra O'Connell. Robbery and black marketeering.
- Blackout* (1950), 73m, d. Robert S. Baker, p. Robert S. Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. Robert S. Baker/John Gilling, w. Maxwell Reed, Dinah Sheridan. Smuggling.
- The Blind Goddess* (1948), 87m, d. Harold French, p. Betty Box (Gainsborough), sc. Muriel Box/Sydney Box, w. Eric Portman, Anne Crawford. Embezzlement.
- Blind Man's Bluff* (1952), 67m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Charles Reynolds (Present Day), sc. John Gilling, w. Zena Marshall, Sydney Tafler. Robbery.
- Blind Spot* (1958), 71m, d. Peter Maxwell, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Butcher's), sc. Kenneth R. Hayles, w. Robert Mackenzie, Delphi Lawrence. Gem smuggling.
- Blood Orange* (1953), 76m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Michael Carreras (Hammer), sc. Jan Read, w. Tom Conway, Mila Parely. Jewel robbery.
- The Blue Lamp* (1950), 84m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Ealing), sc. T. E. B. Clarke/Alexander Mackendrick, w. Jack Warner, Jimmy Hanley, Dirk Bogarde. Robbery.
- The Blue Parrot* (1953), 69m, d. John Harlow, p. Stanley Haynes (ACT Films), sc. Allan Mackinnon, w. Dermot Walsh, Jacqueline Hill. Underworld milieu.
- Bomb in the High Street* (1961), 60m, d. Terence Bishop/Peter Bezencenet, p. Ethel Linder Reiner/T. B. R. Zichy/Henry Passmore (Foxwarren-Elthea), w. Ronald Howard, Terry Palmer. Bank robbery.
- Bond of Fear* (1956), 66m, d. Henry Cass, p. Robert Baker, Monty Berman (Mid-Century), sc. John Gilling/Norman Hudis, w. Dermot Walsh, Jane Barrett. Escaped convict.
- Booby Trap* (1957), 71m, d. Henry Cass, p. Bill Luckwell/Derek Winn (Jaywell), sc.

- Peter Bryan/Bill Luckwell, w. Sydney Tafler, Patti Morgan. Drug dealing.
- Boys in Brown* (1949), 85m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Anthony Darnborough (Gainsborough), sc. Montgomery Tully, w. Jack Warner, Richard Attenborough. Robbery by juveniles.
- The Brain Machine* (1955), 83m, d. Ken Hughes, p. Alec Snowden (Merton Park), sc. Ken Hughes, w. Patrick Barr, Elizabeth Allen. Cortizone theft.
- The Break* (1962), 76m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Tom Blakeley (Blakeley's Films), sc. Pip Baker/Jane Baker, w. Tony Britton, William Lucas. Smuggling.
- Breakout* (1959), 62m, d. Peter Graham Scott, p. Julian Wintle/Leslie Parkyn (Independent Artists), sc. Peter Barnes, w. Lee Patterson, Hazel Court. Embezzlement and jail break.
- Breath of Life* (1962), 67m, d. J. Henry Piperno, p. Norman Cohen/Bill Luckwell (Norcon), sc. J. Henry Piperno, w. George Moore, Larry Martyn. Bank robbery.
- Brighton Rock* (1947), 91m, d. John Boulting, p. Roy Boulting (ABPC), sc. Graham Greene/Terence Rattigan, w. Richard Attenborough, Hermione Badely. Protection racketeering
- The Broken Horseshoe* (1953), 79m, d. Martyn C. Webster, p. Ernest G. Roy (Nettlefield), p. A. R. Rawlinson, w. Robert Beatty, Elizabeth Sellars. Drug racketeering.
- Cairo* (1963), 91m, d. Wolf Rilla, p. Lawrence P. Bachmann/Ronald Kinnoch (MGM), sc. Joanne Court, w. George Sanders, Richard Johnson. Theft, Cairo.
- Calculated Risk* (1963), 72m, d. Norman Harrison, p. William McLeod (McLeod), sc. Edwin Richfield, w. William Lucas, John Rutland. Bank robbery.
- The Calendar* (1948), 80m, d. Arthur Crabtree, p. Anthony Darnborough (Gainsborough), sc. Geoffrey Kerr, w. Greta Gynt, John McCallum. Horse race racketeering.
- Calling Bulldog Drummond* (1951), 80m, d. Victor Saville, p. Hayes Goetz (MGM British), sc. Gerard Fairlie/Howard Emmett Rogers/Arthur Wimperis, w. Walter Pidgeon, Margaret Leighton. Robbery.
- Cairo Road* (1950), 95m, d. David Macdonald, p. Aubrey Baring (Mayflower), sc. Robert Westerby, w. Eric Portman, Laurence Harvey. Drug smuggling, Egypt.
- The Case of Charles Peace* (1949), 88m, d. Norman Lee, p. John Argyle (Argyle), sc. Doris Davison/Norman Lee, w. Michael Martin Harvey, Chilli Bouchier. Burglary.
- Cash on Demand* (1961), 66m, d. Quentin Lawrence, p. Michael Carreras (Hammer-Woodpecker), sc. David T. Chantler/Lewis Greifer, w. Peter

Cushing, Andre Morell. Robbery.

The Challenge (1960), 89m, d. John Gilling, p. John Temple-Smith (Alexandra), sc. John Gilling, w. Jayne Mansfield, Anthony Quayle. Bullion robbery.

Chase a Crooked Shadow (1958), 87m, d. Michael Anderson, p. Douglas Fairbanks Jr./Thomas Clyde (Associated Dragon), w. Richard Todd, Anne Baxter. Theft, Costa Brava.

Clash by Night (1963), 75m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Maurice J. Wilson (Eternal), sc. Maurice J. Wilson/Montgomery Tully, w. Terence Longdon, Jennifer Jayne. Prison escape.

Cloudburst (1951), 92m, d. Francis Searle, p. Anthony Hinds/Alexander Pal (Hammer), sc. Leo Marks/Francis Searle, w. Robert Preston, Elizabeth Sellars. Theft.

Companions in Crime (1954), 70m, d. John Krish, p. William N. Boyle (Republic), sc. Kenneth Hayles/Patricia Latham, w. Clifford Evans, George Woodbridge. Smuggling.

Confession (1955), 90m, d. Ken Hughes, p. Alec Snowden (Anglo-Guild), sc. Ken Hughes, w. Sydney Chaplin, Audrey Dalton. Theft.

Contraband Spain (1955), 82m, d. Lawrence Huntington, p. Ernest Gartside (Diadem), sc. Lawrence Huntington, w. Richard Greene, Anouk Aimee. Forgery, Spain.

Cosh Boy (1953), 75m, d. Lewis Gilbert, p. Daniel Angel (Daniel Angel-Romulus), sc. Lewis Gilbert/Vernon Harris, w. James Kenney, Joan Collins. Robbery.

Compelled (1960), 56m, d. Ramsey Harrington, p. Brian Taylor (Danziger), sc. Mark Grantham, w. Ronald Howard, Beth Rogan. Jewel robbery.

The Counterfeit Plan (1957), 87m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Alec Snowden (Merton Park), sc. James Eastwood, w. Zachary Scott, Reggie Castle. Counterfeiting.

The Criminal (1960), 97m, d. Joseph Losey, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Alun Owen, w. Stanley Baker, Margit Saad. Robbery.

The Crooked Sky (1957), 77m, d. Henry Cass, p. Bill Luckwell/Derek Winn (Luckwin), Sc. Norman Hudis, w. Wayne Morris, Karin Booth. Counterfeiting.

Cross Channel (1955), 61m, d. R. G. Springsteen, p. William N. Boyle (Republic Productions), sc. Rex Rienits, w. Wayne Morris, Yvonne Furneaux. Jewel smuggling.

Crossroads to Crime (1960), 57m, d. Gerry Anderson, p. Gerry Anderson/John Read (AP Films), sc. Alun Falconer, w. Anthony Oliver, Patricia Heneghan. Lorry hijacking.

Crosstrap (1962), 61m, d. Robert Hartford-Davis, p. Michael Deeley/George Mills

sc. Newbery Clyne Avon,/Philip Wrestler, w. Laurence Payne, Jill Adams. Jewel theft.

Dancing With Crime (1947), 83m, d. John Paddy Carstairs, p. James A. Carter (Coronet-Alliance), sc. Brock Williams, w. Richard Attenborough, Barry K. Barnes. Black marketeering.

Dangerous Assignment (1950), 58m, d. Ben R. Hart, p. Miriam Crowdy (Target), sc. Chuck Messina, w. Pamela Deeming Lionel Murton. Stolen car racketeering.

Danger by My Side (1962), 63m, d. Charles Saunders, p. John I. Phillips (Butcher's), sc. Ronald C. Liles/Aubrey Cash, w. Anthony Oliver, Maureen Connell. Robbery.

Dangerous Afternoon (1961), 62m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen (Theatrecraft), sc. Brandon Fleming, w. Ruth Dunning, Nora Nicholson. Escaped convict.

Dangerous Cargo (1954), 61m, d. John Harlow, p. Stanley Haynes (ACT Films), sc. Stanley Haynes, Susan Stephen, Jack Watling. Bullion robbery.

Dangerous Voyage (1954), 72m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. W. H. Williams (Merton Park), sc. Julian Ward, w. William Lundigan, Naomi Chance. Theft.

The Dark Light (1951), 66m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. Michael Carreras (Hammer), sc. Vernon Sewell, w. Albert Lieven, David Greene. Bank robbery.

The Dark Man (1951), 91m, d. Jeffrey Dell, p. Julian Wintle (Independent Artists), sc. Jeffrey Dell, w. Edward Underdown, Maxwell Reed. Robbery and black marketeering.

The Dark Road (1948), 72m, d. Alfred Goulding, p. Henry Halstead (Marylebone), w. Charles Stuart, Joyce Linden. Robbery.

Date With Disaster (1957), 61m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen (Fortress), sc. Brock Williams, w. Tom Drake, William Hartnell. Theft.

The Day They Robbed the Bank of England (1960), 85m, d. John Guillermin, p. Jules Buck (Summit), sc. Howard Clewes/Richard Maibaum, w. Aldo Ray, Elizabeth Sellars. Bank robbery.

Dead Lucky (1960), 64m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Ralph Bond/Robert Dunbar (ACT Films), sc. Sidney Nelson, Maurice Harrison, w. Vincent Ball, Betty McDowall. Gambling racketeering.

Death Over My Shoulder (1958), 89m, d. Arthur Crabtree, p. Frank Bevis (Vicar), sc. Norman Hudis, w. Keefe Brasselle, Bonar Colleano. Insurance fraud and hired killing.

The Delavine Affair (1954), 64m, d. Douglas Pierce, p. John Croydon/Henry Passmore (Croydon-Passmore), sc. George Fisher, w. Peter Reynolds, Honor Blackman. Jewel

robbery.

Delayed Action (1954), 60m, d. John Harlow, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Kenilworth), sc. Geoffrey Orme, w. Robert Ayres, Alan Wheatley. Robbery.

The Desperate Man (1959), 57m, d. Peter Maxwell, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. James Eastwood, w. Jill Ireland, Conrad Phillips. Jewel theft.

Desperate Moment (1953), 88m, d. Compton Bennett, p. George H. Brown (Fanfare), sc. George H. Brown/Patrick Kirwan, w. Dirk Bogarde, Mai Zetterling. Racketeering, Poland.

The Devil's Daffodil (1962), 86m, d. Akos Rathany, p. Steven Pallos/Donald Taylor (Omnia-Rialto), sc. Donald Taylor/Basil Dawson, w. Christopher Lee, Marius Goring. Drug smuggling.

Devil's Point (1954), 65m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Charles Deane, (Charles Deane), w. Richard Arlen, Greta Gynt. Cortizone theft.

Dial 999 (1955), 86m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Alec Snowden (Merton Park), sc. Montgomery Tully, w. Gene Nelson, Mona Freeman. Aiding and abetting.

The Diamond (1954), 83m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Steven Pallos (Gibraltar), sc. John C. Higgins, w. Dennis O'Keefe, Margaret Sheridan. Bullion robbery and synthetic diamond racketeering.

Dick Barton - Special Agent (1948), 70m, d. Alfred Goulding, p. Henry Halstead (Marylebone), sc. Alan Stranks, w. Don Stannard, George Ford. Smuggling and foreign agency.

Dilemma (1962), 90m, d. Peter Maxwell, p. Ted Lloyd (ACT Films), sc. Peter Maxwell, Peter Halliday, Ingrid Hafner. Drug peddling.

Diplomatic Passport (1954), 64m, d. Gene Martel, p. Burt Balaban/Gene Martel (Rich & Rich-Princess), sc. Paul Tabori, w. Marsha Hunt, Paul Carpenter. Jewel smuggling, Paris.

Double Exposure (1954), 63m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Kenilworth), sc. John Gilling, w. John Bentley, Rona Anderson. Private investigator.

Echo of Barbara (1961), 58m, d. Sidney Hayers, p. Arthur Alcott (Independent Artists), sc. John Kruse, w. Mervyn Johns, Maureen Connell. Racketeering.

The Embezzler (1954), 61m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert S. Baker/ Monty Berman (Kenilworth-Mid-Century), sc. John Gilling, w. Charles Victor, Zena Marshall. Bank robbery.

The End of the Line (1957), 64m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen (Fortress), sc.

Paul Erickson, w. Alan Baxter, Barbara Shelley. Robbery.

Enter Inspector Duval (1961), 64m, d. Max Varnel, p. Bill Luckwell,/Jock MacGregor (Bill and Michael Luckwell), sc. J. Henry Piperno, w. Anton Diffring, Diane Hart. Jewel theft.

Escape (1948), 79m, d. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, p. William Perlberg (Twentieth Century), sc. Phillip Dunne, w. Rex Harrison, Peggy Cummins. Escaped convict.

Escape by Night (1954), 79m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Bonar Colleano, Andrew Ray, Sidney James. Vice racketeering.

Eyewitness (1956), 82m, d. Muriel Box, p. Sydney Box (Rank), sc. Janet Green, w. Donald Sinden, Nigel Stock. Robbery.

Face of a Stranger (1964), 56m, d. John Moxey, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. John Sansom, w. Jeremy Kemp, Bernard Archard. Hidden loot.

The Fake (1953), 81m, d. Godfrey Grayson, p. Steven Pallos/Ambrose Grayson (Pax), sc. Patrick Kirwan/Bridget Boland, w. Dennis O'Keefe, Coleen Gray. Art forgery and theft.

Feet of Clay (1960), 55m, d. Frank Marshall, p. Brian Taylor (Danziger), sc. Mark Grantham, w. Vincent Ball, Wendy Williams. Drug racketeering.

Files from Scotland Yard (1951), 57m, d. Anthony Squire, p. Henry Hobhouse (Parthian), w. John Harvey, Moira Lister. Three police cases.

Find the Lady (1956), 56m, d. Charles Saunders, p. John Temple-Smith/Francis Edge (Major), sc. Kenneth R. Hayles/Beverly Brooks, w. Donald Houston. Bank robbery.

Five to One (1963), 56m, d. Gordon Flemying, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Roger Marshall, w. Lee Montague, Ingrid Hafner. Robbery.

The Flamingo Affair (1948), 58m, d. Horace Shepherd, p. Horace Shepherd (Inspiration), sc. Maurice Moisiewitsch, w. Denis Webb, Colette Melville. Robbery and black marketeering.

Flannelfoot (1953), 74m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. E. J. Fancey (E. J. Fancey), sc. Carl Heck, w. Ronald Howard, Mary Germaine. Jewel theft.

The Flesh is Weak (1957), 88m, d. Don Chaffey, p. Raymond Stross (Raystro), sc. Leigh Vance, w. John Derek, Milly Vitale. Prostitution racketeering.

The Floating Dutchman (1953), 76m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. W. H. Williams (Merton Park), sc. Vernon Sewell, w. Dermot Walsh, Sydney Tafler. Jewel robbery.

- The Flying Scot* (1957), 69m, d. Compton Bennett, p. Compton Bennett (Insignia), sc. Norman Hudis, w. Lee Patterson, Kay Callard. Robbery.
- Forbidden Cargo* (1954), 85m, d. Harold French, p. Sydney Box (London Independent), sc. Sydney Box, w. Nigel Patrick, Elizabeth Sellars. Drug smuggling.
- Fortune is a Woman* (1957), 95m, d. Sidney Gilliat, p. Frank Launder/Sidney Gilliat, sc. John Harvel, sc. Frank Launder/Sidney Gilliat/Val Valentine, w. Jack Hawkins, Arlene Dahl. Forgery and fraud.
- The Fourth Square* (1961), 57m, d. Allan Davis, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. James Eastwood, w. Conrad Phillips, Natasha Parry. Jewel theft.
- Freedom to Die* (1962), 61m, d. Francis Searle, p. Charles A. Leeds (Bayford), sc. Arthur la Bern, w. Paul Maxwell, Felicity Young. Robbery.
- The Frightened City* (1961), 97m, d. John Lemont, p. John Lemont/Leigh Vance (Zodiac), sc. Leigh Vance, w. Herbert Lom, John Gregson. Protection racketeering.
- The Frightened Man* (1952), 69m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Dermot Walsh, Barbara Murray. Theft.
- The Gambler and the Lady* (1952), 74m, d. Pat Jenkins/Sam Newfield, p. Anthony Hinds (Hammer), w. Dane Clark, Kathleen Byron. Gambling and protection racketeering.
- Gang War* (1962), 65m, d. Frank Marshall, p. Brian Langslow (Danziger), sc. Mark Grantham, w. Sean Kelly, Eira Heath. Jukebox racketeering.
- Gaolbreak* (1962), 61m, d. Francis Searle, p. Francis Searle/Ronald Liles (Butcher's), sc. A. R. Rawlinson, w. Peter Reynolds, Avice Landone. Theft.
- The Gelignite Gang* (1956), 78m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Geoffrey Goodheart (Cybex), sc. Brandon Fleming, w. Wayne Morris, James Kenney. Robbery.
- The Gentle Trap* (1960), 59m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Jack Parsons (Butcher's), sc. Brock Williams/Alan Osborne, w. Spencer Teakle, Felicity Young. Jewel theft.
- Gideon's Day* (1958), 91m, d. John Ford, p. Michael Killanin (Columbia British), sc. T. E. B. Clarke, w. Jack Hawkins, Dianne Foster. Racketeering and police corruption.
- The Gilded Cage* (1955), 77m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. Brock Williams, w. Alex Nicol, Veronica Hurst. Art smuggling.
- The Girl Hunters* (1963), 103m, d. Roy Rowland, p. Robert Fellows/Charles Reynolds (Present Day), sc. Mickey Spillane/Roy Rowland/Robert Fellows, w. Mickey Spillane, Shirley Eaton. Private investigator, New York.

- Girl in the Headlines* (1963), 93m, d. Michael Truman, p. John Davis (Viewfinder), sc. Vivienne Knight/Patrick Campbell, w. Ian Hendry, Ronald Fraser. Drug racketeering.
- The Golden Salamander* (1950), 87m, d. Ronald Neame, p. Alexander Galperson (Pinewood), sc. Victor Canning/Ronald Neame, w. Trevor Howard, Anouk Aimee. Gun running, Tunis.
- The Gold Express* (1955), 58m, d. Guy Fergusson, p. Frank Wells (Gaumont), sc. Jackson Budd, w. Vernon Gray, Ann Walford. Gold robbery.
- The Good Die Young* (1954), 98m, d. Lewis Gilbert, p. Jack Clayton (Remus), sc. Lewis Gilbert/Vernon Harris, w. Laurence Harvey, Gloria Grahame, Richard Basehart. Robbery.
- Good Time Girl* (1948), 93m, d. David Macdonald, p. Sydney Box/Samuel Goldwyn Jr. (Triton), sc. Muriel Box/Sydney Box/Ted Willis, w. Jean Kent, Dennis Price. Racketeering.
- The Green Buddha* (1954), 62m, d. John Lemont, p. William N. Boyle (Republic Productions), sc. Paul Erickson, w. Wayne Morris, Mary Germaine. Jewel theft.
- The Great Van Robbery* (1959), 70m, d. Max Varnel, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Denis Shaw, Kay Callard. Robbery.
- Guilty?* (1956), 93m, d. Edmond T. Greville, p. Charles A Leeds (Gibraltar), sc. Maurice J. Wilson/Ernest Dudley, w. John Justin, Barbara Laage. Counterfeiting, France.
- A Gunman Has Escaped* (1948), 58m, d. Richard Grey, p. Harry Goodman/Richard Grey (Condor Films), sc. John Gilling, w. John Harvey, John Fitzgerald. Robbery.
- A Guy Called Caesar* (1962), 62m, d. Frank Marshall, p. Bill Luckwell/Umesh Mallik (Bill and Michael Luckwell), sc. Umesh Mallik/Tom Burdon, w. Conrad Phillips, George Moon. Jewel theft.
- Hammer the Toff* (1952), 71m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. Ernest G. Roy (Nettlefold), w. John Bentley, Patricia Dainton. Robbery.
- The Heart Within* (1957), 61m, d. David Eady, p. Jon Pennington (Pennington-Eady), sc. Geoffery Orme, w. James Hayter, Earl Cameron. Drug trafficking..
- Held in Trust* (1949), 58m, d. Cecil H. Williamson, p. Cecil H. Williamson (Productions No 1), sc. Cecil H. Williamson, w. Ian Proctor, Dorothy Shaw. Robbery.
- Hell Drivers* (1957), 108m, d. C. Raker Endfield, p. B. S. Fisz (Rank-Aqua), sc. C. Raker Endfield/John Kruse, w. Stanley Baker, Herbert Lom. Racketeering.

- Hell is a City* (1960), 98m, d. Val Guest, p. Michael Carreras (Hammer), sc. Val Guest, w. Stanley Baker, John Crawford. Robbery and illegal gambling.
- He Who Rides a Tiger* (1965), 103m, d. Charles Crichton, p. David Newman (David Newman), sc. Trevor Peacock, w. Tom Bell, Judi Dench. Burglary.
- The Hideout* (1956), 57m, d. Peter Graham Scott, p. John Temple-Smith/Francis Edge (Major), sc. Kenneth R. Hayles, w. Dermot Walsh, Ronald Howard. Theft.
- High Jump* (1959), 66m, d. Godfrey Grayson, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Richard Wyler, Lisa Daniely. Jewel robbery.
- Hi-Jack* (1957), 50m, d. Cecil H. Williamson, p. Cecil H. Williamson, sc. Cecil H. Williamson, w. Paul Carpenter, Mary Martin. Counterfeiting, Spain.
- The Hi-Jackers* (1963), 69m, d. Jim O'Connolly, p. John I. Phillips (Butcher's), sc. Jim O'Connolly, w. Anthony Booth, Jacqueline Ellis. Lorry hijacking.
- Home to Danger* (1951), 66m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Lance Comfort (New World), sc. John Temple-Smith/Francis Edge, w. Guy Rolfe, Rona Anderson. Drug peddling.
- Hot Ice* (1952), 65m, d. Kenneth Hume, p. Charles Reynolds (Present Day-SWH Piccadilly), sc. Kenneth Hume, w. John Justin, Barbara Murray. Jewel theft.
- The Hour of 13* (1952), 78m, d. Harold French, p. Hayes Goetz (MGM British), sc. Howard Emmett Rogers/Leon Gordon, w. Peter Lawford, Dawn Addams. Robbery.
- House of Secrets* (1956), 97m, d. Guy Green, p. Julian Wintle/Vivian A. Cox (Rank), sc. Robert Buckner/Bryan Forbes, w. Michael Craig, Brenda de Banzie. Forgery.
- I Believe in You* (1952), 95m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Ealing), sc. Michael Relph/Basil Dearden/Jack Whittingham/Nicholas Phipps, w. Celia Johnson, Cecil Parker. Juvenile crime.
- I'll Get You For This* (1951), 83m, d. Joseph M. Newman, p. Joseph Kaufman (Kaydor-Romulus), sc. George Callahan/William Rose, w. George Raft, Collen Gray. Forgery.
- Impact* (1963), 61m, d. Peter Maxwell, p. John I. Phillips (Butcher's), sc. Peter Maxwell/Conrad Phillips, w. Conrad Phillips, George Pastell. Robbery and diamond smuggling.
- Impulse* (1955), 80m, d. Charles de la Tour/Cy Endfield, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. Lawrence Huntington/'Jonathan Roach', w. Arthur Kennedy, Constance Smith, Jewel theft.
- Incident at Midnight* (1963), 56m, d. Norman Harrison, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Arthur la Bern, w. Anton Diffring, William Sylvester. Drug dealing.

- Information Received* (1961), 77m, d. Robert Lynn, p. John Klein/George Maynard (United Co-Production), sc. Paul Ryder, w. Sabina Sesselman, William Sylvester. Robbery.
- The Informers* (1963), 105m, d. Ken Annakin, p. William MacQuitty (Rank), sc. Alun Falconer/Paul Durst, w. Nigel Patrick, Margaret Whiting. Bank robbery and police informants.
- Interpol* (1957), 92m, d. John Gilling, p. Irving Allen/Albert Broccoli/Phil C. Samuel (Warwick), sc. John Paxton, w. Victor Mature, Anita Ekberg. Drug smuggling.
- The Intruder* (1953), 84m, d. Guy Hamilton, p. Ivan Foxwell, sc. Robin Maugham/John Hunter, w. Jack Hawkins, Michael Medwin. Burglary.
- It Always Rains on Sunday* (1947), 92m, d. Robert Hamer, p. Henry Cornelius (Ealing), sc. Robert Hamer/Henry Cornelius, w. Googie Withers, Jack Warner. Black marketeering.
- Jackpot* (1960), 71m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Maurice J. Wilson (Eternal), sc. Maurice J. Wilson/Montgomery Tully, w. William Hartnell, Betty McDowell. Robbery.
- Jim the Penman* (1947), 45m, d. Frank Chisnell, p. Frank Chisnell, sc. Terry Sandford/Edward Eve, w. Mark Dignam, Beatrice Kane. Forgery.
- Joe Macbeth* (1955), 90m, d. Ken Hughes, p. M. J. Frankovich, George Maynard (Film Locations), sc. Philip Yordan, w. Paul Douglas, Ruth Roman. Racketeering.
- Johnny on the Spot* (1954), 72m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. E. J. Fancey (E. J. Fancey), sc. Maclean Rogers, w. Hugh McDermott, Elspet Gray. Criminal gang.
- Johnny, You're Wanted* (1956), 71m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. George Maynard (Anglo-Amalgamated), sc. Michael Leighton, Frank Driscoll, w. John Slater, Alfred Marks. Drug smuggling.
- Journey Ahead* (1947), 62m, d. Peter Mills, p. Peter Mills (Random), sc. Warren Tute, w. Ruth Haven, John Stevens. Smuggling.
- Judgment Deferred* (1952), 88m, d. John Baxter, p. John Baxter/John Grierson (Group 3), sc. Geoffrey Orme, Barbara K. Emary, w. Hugh Sinclair, Helen Shingler. Drug racketeering.
- Jungle Street* (1961), 82m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen (Theatrecraft), sc. Alexander Dore, w. David McCallum, Kenneth Cope. Robbery.
- The Key Man* (1957), 63m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Alex Snowden (Insignia), sc. J. McLaren Ross, w. Lee Patterson, Hy Hazell. Robbery.
- Kill Me Tomorrow* (1957), 80m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Francis Searle (Delta), sc. Robert Falconer/Manning O'Brien, w. Pat O'Brien, Lois Maxwell. Diamond smuggling.

- Kil 1* (1962), 61m, d. Arnold Louis Miller, p. Stanley Long/Arnold Miller (Searchlight), sc. Bob Kesten, w. Ronald Howard, Jess Conrad. Fraud and theft
- King of the Underworld* (1952), 82m, d. Victor M. Gover, p. Gilbert Church (Bushey), sc. John Gilling, w. Tod Slaughter, Patrick Barr. Blackmail and theft.
- Late at Night* (1946), 76m, d. Michael Chorlton, p. Herbert Wynne (Bruton Films), sc. Henry C. James, w. Daphne Day, Barry Morse. Black marketeering.
- The League of Gentlemen* (1960), 113m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Allied Film Makers), sc. Bryan Forbes, w. Jack Hawkins, Nigel Patrick. Bank robbery.
- The Limping Man* (1953), 74m, d. Charles de la Tour/Cy Endfield, p. Donald Ginsberg (Banner), sc. Ian Stuart Black/Reginald Long, w. Lloyd Bridges, Moira Lister. Smuggling.
- Locker 69* (1962), 69m, d. Norman Harrison, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Richard Harris, w. Eddie Byrne, Paul Daneman. Private investigator.
- London Belongs to Me* (1948), 112m, d. Sidney Gilliat, p. Frank Launder, Sidney Gilliat (IP Individual), sc. Sidney Gilliat/J. B. Williams, w. Richard Attenborough, Alastair Sim. Car theft.
- The Long Arm* (1956), 96m, d. Charles Frend, p. Tom Morahan (Ealing), sc. Janet Green/Robert Barr/Dorothy Christie/Campbell Christie, w. Jack Hawkins, Richard Leech. Robbery.
- The Long Haul* (1957), 100m, d. Ken Hughes, p. Maxwell Sutton (Marksman), sc. Ken Hughes, w. Victor Mature, Diana Dors. Fur smuggling.
- The Long Memory* (1953), 96m, d. Robert Hamer, p. Hugh Stewart (Europa), sc. Robert Hamer/Frank Harvey, w. John Mills, John McCallum. Perjury.
- The Lost Hours* (1952), 72m, d. David Macdonald, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Mark Stevens, Jean Kent. Racketeering.
- The Main Chance* (1964), 61m, d. John Knight, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Richard Harris, w. Gregoire Aslan, Edward de Souza. Jewel theft.
- Man Accused* (1959), 58m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Mark Grantham, sc. Ronald Howard, Carol Marsh. Jewel theft.
- Man at the Carlton Tower* (1961), 57m, d. Robert Tronson, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Philip Mackie, w. Maxine Audley, Lee Montague. Jewel robbery.
- Man Detained* (1961), 59m, d. Robert Tronson, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Richard Harris, w. Bernard Archard, Elvi Hale. Burglary and counterfeiting.

- Man from Tangier* (1957), 67m, d. Lance Comfort, p. W. G. Chalmers (Butcher's), sc. Manning O'Brine, w. Robert Hutton, Lisa Gastoni. Passport forgery racketeering.
- The Man Inside* (1958), 97m, d. John Gilling, p. Irving Allen/Albert Broccoli (Warwick), sc. Richard Maibaum/John Gilling/David Shaw, w. Jack Palance, Anita Ekberg. Jewel theft.
- The Man in the Back Seat* (1961), 57m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. Julian Wintle/Leslie Parkyn (Independent Artists), sc. Malcolm Hulke,/Eric Paice, w. Derren Nesbitt, Keith Faulkner. Robbery.
- The Man Who Couldn't Walk* (1960), 63m, d. Henry Cass, p. Jock Macgregor/Umesh Mallik (Bill and Michael Luckwell), sc. Umesh Mallik, w. Peter Reynolds, Eric Pohlmann,. Jewel theft.
- Man on the Run* (1949), 82m, d. Lawrence Huntington, p. Lawrence Huntington (ABPC), sc. Lawrence Huntington, w. Derek Farr, Joan Hopkins. Robbery and army desertion.
- Mantrap* (1953), 78m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Michael Carreras (Exclusive-Hammer), sc. Paul Tabori/Terence Fisher, w. Paul Henreid, Lois Maxwell. Private detective.
- The Man Who Was Nobody* (1960), 58m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. James Eastwood, w. Hazel Court, John Crawford. Diamond smuggling.
- The Man Who Watched Trains Go By* (1953), 80m, d. Harold French, p. Joseph Shaftel (Raymond Stross), sc. Harold French, w. Claude Rains, Marta Toren. Embezzlement, Holland.
- Man With a Gun* (1958), 60m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Michael Winner, w. Lee Patterson, Rona Anderson. Protection racketeering.
- The Marked One* (1963), 65m, d. Francis Searle, p. Tom Blakeley (Planet), sc. Paul Erickson, w. William Lucas, Zena Walker. Counterfeiting.
- Mark of the Phoenix* (1958), 64m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. W G Chalmers (Butcher's), sc. Norman Hudis, w. Julia Arnall, Sheldon Lawrence. Jewel thief, Germany.
- Marriage of Convenience* (1960), 58m, d. Clive Donner, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Robert Stewart, w. John Cairney, Harry H. Corbett. Escaped convict.
- A Matter of Murder* (1949), 59m, d. John Gilling, p. Roger Proudlock/Sam Lee (Vandyke), sc. John Gilling, w. John Barry, Charles Clapham. Embezzlement.
- Meet Mr Callaghan* (1954), 88m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen/Derrick de Marney (Pinnacle), sc. Brock Williams, w. Derrick de Marney, Harriette Johns. Private investigator.

- Model For Murder* (1959), 73m, d. Terry Bishop, p. C. Jack Parsons/Robert Dunbar (Parroch), sc. Terry Bishop/Robert Dunbar, w. Keith Andes, Hazel Court. Gem smuggling.
- Moment of Danger* (1960), 96m, d. Laslo Benedek, p. Thomas Clyde (Cavalcade), sc. David Osborn/Donald Ogden Stewart, w. Trevor Howard, Dorothy Dandridge. Jewel theft.
- The Moon-Spinners* (1964), 119m, d. James Neilson, p. Bill Anderson (Walt Disney), sc. Michael Dyne, w. Hayley Mills, Eli Wallach. Jewel robbery, Crete.
- Morning Call* (1957), 75m, d. Arthur Crabtree, p. Bill Luckwell/Derek Winn (Winwell), sc. Leo Townsend, w. Ron Randell, Greta Gynt. Kidnapping.
- Murder at Scotland Yard* (1952), 75m, d. Victor M. Gover, p. Gilbert Church (Bushey), sc. John Gilling, w. Tod Slaughter, Patrick Barr. Robbery.
- My Brother's Keeper* (1948), 91m, d. Alfred Roome/Roy Rich, p. Anthony Darnborough (Gainsborough), sc. Frank Harvey, w. Jack Warner, Jane Hylton. Escape of remand prisoners.
- My Death is a Mockery* (1952), 75m, d. Tony Young, p. David Dent (Park Lane), w. Donald Houston, Kathleen Byron. Smuggling.
- The Mysterious Mr Nicholson* (1947), 78m, d. Oswald Mitchell, p. Gilbert Church (Bushey), sc. Francis Miller/Oswald Mitchell, w. Anthony Hulme, Lesley Osmond. Theft.
- Naked Fury* (1959), 60m, d. Charles Saunders, p. Guido Coen (Cocenda), sc. Brock Williams, w. Reed de Rouen, Kenneth Cope. Robbery.
- Never Back Losers* (1961), 60m, d. Robert Tronson, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Lukas Heller, w. Jack Hedley, Jacqueline Ellis. Gambling racketeering.
- Never Let Go* (1960), 91m, d. John Guillermin, p. Peter de Savigny (Independent Artists), sc. Alun Falconer, w. Richard Todd, Peter Sellars. Stolen car racketeering.
- Night and the City* (1950), 101m, d. Jules Dassin, p. Samuel G. Engel (Twentieth Century), sc. Jo Eisinger, w. Richard Widmark, Gene Tierney. Sports racketeering.
- Night Beat* (1948), 91m, d. Harold Huth, p. Harold Huth (BLPA), sc. T. J. Morrison/Roland Pertwee/Robert Westerby, w. Anne Crawford, Maxwell Reed. Black marketeering.
- Night Without Pity* (1962), 56m, d. Theodore Zichy, p. Jack Parsons (Parroch), sc. Aubrey Cash, w. Sarah Lawson, Neil McCallum. Robbery.
- No Orchids for Miss Blandish* (1948), 104m, d. StJohn L. Clewes, p. A. R. Shipman (Tudor-Alliance), sc. StJohn L. Clewes, w. Jack la Rue, Linden Travers. Kidnapping.

- Noose* (1948), 95m, d. Edmond T. Greville, p. Edward Dryhurst, sc. Richard Llewellyn/Edward Dryhurst, w. Carole Landis, Derek Farr. Black marketeering.
- No Road Back* (1957), 83m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Steven Pallos/Charles Leeds (Gibraltar), sc. Charles Leeds/Montgomery Tully, w. Skip Homier, Paul Carpenter, Robbery.
- No Safety Ahead* (1959), 71m, d. Max Varnel, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Robert Hurst, w. James Kenney, Susan Beaumont. Bank robbery.
- No Way Back* (1949), 72m, d. Stefan Osiecki, p. Derrick de Marney (Concanen Recordings), sc. Stefan Osiecki/Derrick de Marney, w. Terence de Marney, Eleanor Summerfield. Robbery and black marketeering.
- Now Barabbas was a robber...* (1949), 87m, d. Gordan Parry, p. Anatole de Grunwald, sc. Gordon Parry, w. Richard Greene, Cedric Hardwicke. Various lives of convicts.
- Nowhere to Go* (1958), 97m, d. Seth Holt, p. Eric Williams (Ealing), sc. Seth Holt/Kenneth Tynan, w. George Nader, Maggie Smith. Theft.
- Number Six* (1962), 59m, d. Robert Tronson, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Philip Mackie, w. Ivan Desny, Nadja Regin. Robbery.
- Offbeat* (1961), 72m, d. Cliff Owen, p. E. M. Smedley Aston (Northiam), sc. Peter Barnes, w. William Sylvester, Mai Zetterling. Robbery.
- Once a Sinner* (1950), 80m, d. Lewis Gilbert, p. John Argyle, sc. David Evans (N Ronald Marsh, w. Pat Kirkwood, Jack Watling. Counterfeiting.
- One Way Out* (1955), 61m, d. Francis Searle, p. John Temple-Smith/Francis Edge (Major), sc. Jonathan Roche, w. Jill Adams, Eddie Byrne. Jewel theft and blackmail.
- On the Run* (1958), 70m, d. Ernest Morris, p. Edward J Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Neil McCallum, Susan Beaumont. Boxing racketeering.
- On the Run* (1963), 59m, d. Robert Tronson, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Richard Harris, w. Emrys Jones, Sarah Lawson. Hidden loot.
- The Painted Smile* (1962), 60m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Tom Blakeley (Blakeley's Films-Doverton), sc. Jane Baker/Pip Baker, w. Liz Fraser, Kenneth Griffith. Prostitution racketeering.
- Panic* (1963), 69m, d. John Gilling, p. Guido Coen (Ingram), sc. John Gilling, w. Janine Gray, Glyn Houston. Robbery.
- Park Plaza 605* (1953), 75m, d. Bernard Knowles, p. Bertram Ostrer/Albert Fennell (B

and A Productions), sc. Albert Fennell/Bernard Knowles/Bertram Ostrer/Clifford Witting, w. Tom Conway, Eva Bartok. Jewel smuggling.

The Passing Stranger (1954), 84m, d. John Arnold, p. Anthony Simmons/Leon Clore/Ian Gibson-Smith (Harlequin), sc. Anthony Simmons, John Arnold, w. Lee Patterson, Diane Cilento. Robbery and gun running.

Passport to Shame (1959), 91m, d. Alvin Rakoff, p. John Klein (United Co-Productions), sc. Patrick Alexander, w. Odile Versois, Diana Dors. Prostitution racketeering.

Payroll (1961), 105m, d. Sidney Hayers, p. Norman Priggen (Lynx-Independent Artists), sc. George Baxt, w. Michael Craig, Francoise Prevost. Robbery.

Piccadilly Third Stop (1960), 90m, d. Wolf Rilla, p. Norman Williams (Ethirop), sc. Leigh Vance, w. Terence Morgan, Yoko Tani. Robbery.

Pit of Darkness (1961), 76m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Lance Comfort (Butcher's), sc. Lance Comfort, w. William Franklyn, Moira Redmond. Jewel robbery.

A Place to Go (1963), 86m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Excalibur), sc. Michael Relph/Clive, w. Rita Tushingham, Mike Sarne. Robbery.

Police Dog (1955), 70m, d. Derek Twist, p. Harold Huth (Westridge Fairbanks), sc. Derek Twist, w. Joan Rice, Tim Turner. Robbery.

Pool of London (1951), 85m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Ealing), sc. Jack Whittingham/John Eldridge, w. Bonar Colleano, Susan Shaw. Jewel robbery and smuggling.

Portrait of Alison (1955), 84m, d. Guy Green, p. Frank Godwin (Insignia), sc. Guy Green/Ken Hughes, w. Robert Beatty, Terry Moore. Jewel smuggling.

The Price of Silence (1960), 73m, d. Montgomery Tully, p. Maurice J. Wilson (Eternal), sc. Maurice J. Wilson, Gordon Jackson, June Thorburn. Blackmail.

The Primitives (1962), 70m, d. Alfred Travers, O. Negus-Fancey (Border), sc. Alfred Travers/Moris Farhi, w. Jan Holden, Bill Edwards. Jewel robbery.

A Prize of Arms (1961), 105m, d. Cliff Owen, p. George Maynard (Inter-State), sc. Paul Ryder, w. Stanley Baker, Helmut Schmidt. Payroll robbery.

A Prize of Gold (1955), 100m, d. Mark Robson, p. Irving Allen/Albert Broccoli/Phil Samuel (Warwick), sc. Robert Buckner/John Paxton, w. Richard Widmark, Mai Zetterling. Gold robbery, Berlin.

The Professionals (1960), 61m, d. Don Sharp, p. Norman Priggen (Independent Artists), sc. Peter Barnes, w. William Lucas, Andrew Faulds. Bank robbery.

- The Quiet Woman* (1951), 71m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Derek Bond, Jane Hylton. Smuggling.
- Radio Cab Murder* (1954), 70m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. George Maynard (Insignia), sc. Vernon Sewell, w. Jimmy Hanley, Lana Morris. Bank robbery.
- Rag Doll* (1961), 67m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Tom Blakeley (Blakeley's Films), sc. Brock Williams/Derry Quinn, w. Jess Conrad, Hermione Baddeley. Burglary.
- Recoil* (1953), 79m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Kieron Moore, Elizabeth Sellars. Jewel robbery.
- Return to Sender* (1963), 61m, d. Gordon Hales, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. John Roddick, w. Nigel Davenport, Yvonne Romain. Illegal financial speculation.
- The Ringer* (1952), 78m, d. Guy Hamilton, p. Hugh Perceval (London-BLPA), sc. Val Valentine/Lesley Storm, w. Herbert Lom, Donald Wolfitt. Master criminal.
- The Rivals* (1963), 56m, d. Max Varnel, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. John Roddick, w. Jack Gwillim, Erica Rogers. Car theft and kidnapping.
- River Beat* (1954), 70m, d. Guy Green, p. Victor Hanbury (Insignia), sc. Rex Rienits, w. Phyllis Kirk, John Bentley. Diamond smuggling.
- River Patrol* (1948), 45m, d. Ben R. Hart, p. Hal Wilson (Knightsbridge), sc. James Corbett, w. John Blythe, Lorna Dean. Black marketeering.
- Robbery With Violence* (1959), 67m, d. George Ivan Barnett, p. George Ivan Barnett (GIB Films), sc. David Cumming, w. Ivan Craig, Sally Day. Bank robbery.
- The Running Man* (1963), 113m, d. Carol Reed, p. Carol Reed/John R. Sloan (Pect Productions), sc. John Mortimer, w. Lee Remick, Laurence Harvey. Insurance fraud, Spain.
- Sail Into Danger* (1957), 72m, d. Kenneth Hume, p. Steven Pallos (Patria), sc. Kenneth Hume, w. Dennis O'Keefe, Kathleen Ryan. Art theft, Spain.
- The Saint's Return* (1953), 73m, d. Seymour Friedman, p. Julian Lesser/Anthony Hinds (Hammer), sc. Allan Mackinnon, w. Louis Hayward, Sydney Tafler. Gambling racketeering.
- Salute the Toff* (1952), 75m, d. Maclean Rogers, p. Ernest G. Roy (Nettlefold), w. John Bentley, Carol Marsh. Insurance fraud
- Scarlet Thread* (1951), 84m, d. Lewis Gilbert, p. Ernest G. Roy (Nettlefold-International Realist), sc. A. R. Rawlinson, w. Kathleen Byron, Laurence Harvey. Jewel theft.

- The Second Mate* (1951), 76m, d. John Baxter, p. John Baxter (Elstree Independent), sc. Barbara K. Emary/Jack Francis, w. Gordon Harker, Graham Moffatt. Jewel smuggling.
- The Secret* (1955), 80m, d. C. Raker Endfield, p. S. Benjamin Fisz (Laureate-Golden Era), sc. C. Raker Endfield, w. Sam Wanamaker, Mandy Miller. Jewel theft.
- The Secret Partner* (1961), 91m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (MGM British), sc. David Pursell/Jack Seddon, w. Stewart Granger, Haya Hararec. Embezzlement, blackmail and theft.
- The Secret Place* (1957), 98m, d. Clive Donner, p. John Bryan/Anthony Perry (Rank), sc. Linette Perry, w. Belinda Lee, Ronald Lewis. Jewel theft.
- The Secret Tent* (1956), 69m, d. Don Chaffey, p. Nat Miller/Frank Bevis (Forward), sc. Jan Read, w. Donald Gray, Andree Melly. Burglary.
- Send For Paul Temple* (1946), 83m, d. John Argyle, p. John Argyle (Butcher), sc. Francis Durbridge/John Argyle, w. Anthony Hulme, Joy Shelton. Jewel robbery.
- The Set-Up* (1963), 58m, d. Gerard Glaister, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Roger Marshall, w. Maurice Denham, John Carson. Jewel robbery.
- Seven Keys* (1962), 57m, d. Pat Jackson, p. Julian Wintle/Leslie Parkyn (Independent Artists), sc. Jack Davies/Henry Blyth, w. Jeannie Carson, Alan Dobic. Hidden loot.
- The Shakedown* (1960), 92m, d. John Lemont, p. Norman Williams (Ethiro), sc. John Lemont/Leigh Vance, w. Terence Morgan, Hazel Court. Pornography and blackmail.
- The Share Out* (1962), 61m, d. Gerard Glaister, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Philip Mackie, w. Bernard Lee, Alexander Knox. Blackmail racketeering.
- The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955), 95m, d. Basil Dearden, p. Michael Relph (Ealing), sc. Michael Relph/Basil Dearden/John Whiting, w. Richard Attenborough, George Baker. Smuggling.
- The Shop at Sly Corner* (1947), 92m, d. George King, p. George King (Pennant Pictures), sc. Katherine Strueby, w. Oscar Homolka, Derek Farr. Burglary and handling stolen goods.
- The Sicilians* (1964), 69m, d. Ernest Morris, p. John I. Phillips/Ronald Liles (Butcher's), sc. Ronald Liles/Reginald Hearne, w. Robert Hutton, Reginald Marsh. Kidnapping, Paris.
- The Six Men* (1951), 65m, d. Michael Law, p. Roger Proudlock (Planet Productions), sc. Reed de Rouen/Michael Law/Richard Eastham, w. Harold Warrender, Reed de Rouen. Jewel robbery.
- The Sleeping Tiger* (1954), 89m, d. Joseph Losey, p. Victor Hanbury (Insignia), sc. Carl

Foreman, w. Dirk Bogarde, Alexis Smith. Robbery.

The Small Voice (1948), 85m, d. Fergus McDonnell, p. Anthony Havelock-Allan (Constellation), sc. Derek Neame/Julian Orde, w. Valerie Hobson, James Donald. Escaped convicts.

The Small World of Sammy Lee (1962), 107m, d. Ken Hughes, p. Ken Hughes/Frank Godwin (Elgin), sc. Ken Hughes, w. Anthony Newley, Robert Stephens, Low-life milieu.

So Evil So Young (1960), 77m, d. Godfrey Grayson, p. Brian Taylor (Danziger), sc. Mark Grantham, w. Jill Ireland, Ellen Pollock. Juvenile robbery.

Soho Incident (1956), 77m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. M. J. Frankovitch/George Maynard (Film Locations), sc. Ian Stuart Black, w. Faith Domergue, Lee Patterson. Gambling racketeering.

The Spider and the Fly (1949), 95m, d. Robert Hamer, p. Maxwell Setton/Aubrey Baring (Pinewood-Mayflower), sc. Robert Westerby, w. Eric Portman, Guy Rolfe. Theft and espionage, France.

Stranger at My Door (1950), 80m, d. Brendan J. Stafford/Desmond Leslie, p. Paul King (Leinster Films), sc. Desmond Leslie, w. Valentine Dyall, Joseph O'Connor. Burglary and blackmail, Dublin.

Street Corner (1953), 94m, d. Muriel Box, p. Sydney Box, William MacQuitty (London Independent), sc. Muriel Box/Sydney Box, Anne Crawford, Peggy Cummins. Crime compendium.

Strongroom (1962), 80m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. Guido Coen (Theatrecraft), sc. Richard Harris/Max Marquis, w. Derren Nesbitt, Colin Gordon. Bank robbery.

Stryker of the Yard (1953), 67m, d. Arthur Crabtree, p. William N. Boyle (Republic), sc. Guy Morgan/Lester Powell, w. Clifford Evans, Jack Watling. Bank robbery and forgery.

Subway in the Sky (1959), 86m, d. Muriel Box, p. Sydney Box/John Temple-Smith/Patrick Filmer-Sankey (Orbit), sc. Jack Andress, w. Van Johnson, Hildegard Neff. Drug dealing, Berlin.

The Switch (1963), 69m, d. Peter Maxwell, p. Philip Ridgeway/Lance Comfort (Philip Ridgeway), sc. Philip Ridgeway/Colin Fraser, w. Anthony Steel, Zena Marshall. Watch smuggling.

Tangier Assignment (1955), 64m, d. Ted Leversuch, p. Cyril Parker (Rock Pictures), sc. Ted Leversuch, w. Robert Simmons, June Powell. Gun running, Tangier.

That Woman Opposite (1957), 85m, d. Compton Bennett, p. William Gell (Monarch), sc. Compton Bennett, w. Phyllis Kirk, Dan O'Herlihy. Jewel theft, France.

- There is Another Sun* (1951), 95m, d. Lewis Gilbert, p. Ernest G. Roy (Nettlefold), sc. Guy Morgan, w. Maxwell Reed, Laurence Harvey. Robbery and racketeering.
- They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947), 103m, d. Cavalcanti, p. Nat Bronstein/James Carter (Gloria-Alliance), sc. Noel Langley, w. Sally Gray, Trevor Howard. Black marketeering and drug racketeering.
- They Never Learn* (1956), 48m, d. Denis Kavanagh, p. E. J. Fancey (Edwin J. Fancey), sc. Denis Kavanagh/E. J. Fancey, w. Adrienne Scott, Jackie Collins. Forgery.
- The Third Man* (1949), 104m, d. Carol Reed, p. David O. Selznick/Alexander Korda (London-BLPA), sc. Graham Greene, w. Joseph Cotten, Alida Valli, Orson Welles. Black marketeering, Vienna.
- Third Time Lucky* (1949), 91m, d. Gordon Parry, p. Mario Zampi (Kenilworth-Alliance), sc. Gerald Butler, w. Glynis Johns, Dermot Walsh. Illegal gambling.
- 13 East Street* (1952), 71m, d. Robert Baker, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Patrick Holt, Sandra Dorne. Robbery.
- Three Crooked Men* (1958), 71m, d. Ernest Morris, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Gordon Jackson, Sarah Lawson. Bank robbery.
- Three Steps to the Gallows* (1953), 81m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. John Gilling, w. Scott Brady, Mary Castle. Jewel smuggling.
- Tiger by the Tail* (1955), 85m, d. John Gilling, p. Robert Baker/Monty Berman (Tempean), sc. Willis Goldbeck/John Gilling, w. Larry Parks, Constance Smith. Counterfeiting.
- Tiger in the Smoke* (1956), 94m, d. Roy Baker, p. Leslie Parkyn (Rank), sc. Anthony Pelissier, w. Tony Wright, Muriel Pavlow. Hidden loot.
- Time to Remember* (1962), 58m, d. Charles Jarrett, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Arthur la Bern, w. Yvonne Monlaur, Harry H. Corbett. Jewel theft.
- Tomorrow At Ten* (1962), 80m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Tom Blakeley (Blakeley's Films), sc. Peter Millar/James Kelly, w. John Gregson, Robert Shaw. Kidnapping.
- Too Hot to Handle* (1960), 100m, d. Terence Young, p. Selim Caltan/Ronald Rietti (Wigmore), sc. Herbert Kretzmer, w. Jayne Mansfield, Leo Genn. Vice racketeering.
- Too Young to Love* (1959), 88m, d. Muriel Box, p. Herbert Smith (Beaconsfield/Welbeck), sc. Muriel Box/Sydney Box, w. Pauline Hahn, Thomas Mitchell. Prostitution, Brooklyn.
- Touch of Death* (1962), 58m, d. Lance Comfort, p. Lewis Linzee (Helion), sc. Lyn Fairhurst, w. William Lucas, David Sumner. Robbery.

Track the Man Down (1955), 75m, d. R. G. Springsteen, p. William N. Boyle (Republic Productions), sc. Paul Erickson/Kenneth R Hayles, w. Kent Taylor, Petula Clark. Robbery.

Traitor's Gate (1964), 80m, d. Freddie Francis, p. Ted Lloyd (Summit), sc. John Sansom, w. Albert Lieven, Gary Raymond. Robbery of Crown Jewels.

Transatlantic (1960), 63m, d. Ernest Morris, p. Brian Taylor (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/James Eastwood, w. Pete Murray, June Thorburn. Jewel theft.

Tread Softly Stranger (1958), 90m, d. Gordon Parry, p. Denis O'Dell (Alderdale), sc. George Minter/Denis O'Dell, w. George Baker, Diana Dors. Embezzlement and robbery.

Turn the Key Softly (1953), 81m, d. Jack Lee, p. Maurice Cowan (Chiltern), sc. John Brophy/Maurice Cowan, w. Yvonne Mitchell, Terence Morgan. Burglary, shoplifting and prostitution.

Twenty-Four Hours to Kill (1965), 83m, d. Peter Bezencenet, p. Bernard Coote/Harry Alan Towers (Grixflag), sc. Peter Yeldham, w. Lex Barker, Mickey Rooney. Gold smuggling, Beirut.

The £20,000 Kiss (1963), 57m, d. John Moxey, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Philip Mackie, w. Dawn Addams, Michael Goodliffe. Private investigator.

Two Living One Dead (1961), 92m, d. Anthony Asquith, p. Karl E Mosley/Teddy Baird (Swan Productions), sc. Lindsey Galloway, w. Virginia McKenna, Bill Travers. Robbery, Sweden.

Undercover Girl (1958), 68m, d. Francis Searle, p. Kay Luckwell/Derek Winn (Bill and Michael Luckwell), sc. Bernard Lewis/Bill Luckwell, w. Paul Carpenter, Kay Callard. Blackmail and drug dealing.

Uneasy Terms (1948), 91m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. Louis H. Jackson (British National), w. Michael Rennie, Moira Lister. Private investigator.

The Unstoppable Man (1960), 68m, d. Terry Bishop, p. Jack Lamont/John Pellatt (Argo), sc. Alun Falconer/P. Manning O'Brine/Terry Bishop, w. Cameron Mitchell, Harry H. Corbett. Kidnapping.

Vengeance is Mine (1949), 59m, d. Alan Cullimore, p. Ben Arbeid (Cullimore-Arbeid), sc. Alan Cullimore, w. Valentine Dyall, Anne Forth. Contract killing.

Victim Five (1964), 86m, d. Robert Lynn, p. Harry Alan Towers/Skip Steloff (Towers of London), sc. Peter Yeldham, w. Lex Barker, Ronald Fraser. Private investigator, Cape Town.

West of Suez (1957), 75m, d. Arthur Crabtree, p. Bill Luckwell/Kay Luckwell/Derek Winn (Winwell), sc. Lance Z. Hargreaves, w. Keefe Brasselle, Kay Callard. Contract

killing.

Whispering Smith Hits London (1952), 82m, d. Francis Searle, p. Anthony Hinds/Julian Lesser (Hammer-Lesser), sc. John Gilling, w. Richard Carlson, Greta Gynt. Blackmail racketeering.

The White Trap (1959), 58m, d. Sidney Hayers, p. Julian Wintle/Leslie Parkyn (Independent Artists), sc. Peter Barnes, w. Lee Patterson, Conrad Phillips. Escaped convict.

The Witness (1959), 58m, d. Geoffrey Muller, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. Julian Bond, w. Dermot Walsh, Greta Gynt. Robbery.

Wings of Danger (1952), 73m, d. Terence Fisher, p. Anthony Hinds (Hammer-Lippert), sc. John Gilling, w. Zachary Scott, Robert Beatty. Forged dollar smuggling.

A Woman of Mystery (1958), 71m, d. Ernest Morris, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Dermot Walsh, Hazel Court. Counterfeiting.

A Woman's Temptation (1959), 60m, d. Godfrey Grayson, p. Edward J. Danziger/Harry Lee Danziger (Danziger), sc. Brian Clemens/Eldon Howard, w. Patricia Driscoll, Robert Ayres. Mail van robbery proceeds.

Wrong Number (1959), 59m, d. Vernon Sewell, p. Jack Greenwood (Merton Park), sc. James Eastwood, w. Peter Reynolds, Lisa Gastoni. Mail van robbery.

The Yellow Balloon (1952), 80m, d. J. Lee-Thompson, p. Victor Skutezky (Marble Arch), sc. J. Lee-Thompson/Anne Burnaby, w. William Sylvester, Kenneth More. Robbery.

APPENDIX II. PUBLISHED WORK BY THE AUTHOR

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WHEN THE GANGS CAME TO BRITAIN: THE POSTWAR BRITISH CRIME FILM.

Andrew Clay

The British crime film has been largely unconsidered in genre criticism. This is in contrast to the American crime film, which has been extensively conceptualised as a generic category, although not unproblematically.¹ In particular, a critical orthodoxy has privileged the gangster film as defining the genre over other crime genres such as the private eye film and the murder mystery.² The discrepancy between the critical attention given to the crime film in these two national cinemas reflects not only the weight of film studies research given to American cinema in comparison to British cinema, but also the different ways that the crime film has developed in the two countries. The American film industry has provided a long tradition of screen gangsters (dating particularly from the early 1930s), recycled by television and elaborated in contemporary Hollywood by respected auteurs such as Coppola and Scorsese. American gangster films have been produced and consumed as genre films, but in contrast British films portraying professional and organised criminality have not been defined by the gangster subgenre. In the classic studio period of British film production (1930s-1960s), the crime film clearly represented both a commercial strategy, a popular genre to exploit the guaranteed markets provided by the government-imposed quota system erected to protect the

British film industry from American competition, and an ideological “construction” in the interests of crime control. Clearly, for any adequate discussion of crime cinema, an awareness of the way in which the narrative specificities of melodrama and the thriller inform the text as a crucial consideration, and implicitly informs the approach adopted here with regard to the crime film.³

The British crime film and the thriller, 1930-1945

The generic form of the classic Hollywood gangster film is invoked here for the manner in which it stands in stark contrast to the British crime film before the Second World War. The crime film developed in quite different ways in the two countries. Unlike American cinema, British films failed to draw on the reality of professional and organised crime to the same degree. While admittedly not reaching the intensity and national prominence of the gangsters of Prohibition in America, organised crime was well-established in Britain, and British gangsters achieved the currency of news. For example, in London, illegal goods and services were provided such as alcohol in after-hours nightclubs; drugs such as cocaine, morphine and heroin were distributed by dealers; and prostitution rackets were highly organised. In other parts of Britain too, gangs were active. In Sheffield, gangs ran illegal “pitch and toss” betting rings and protection rackets and gangs based in Leeds and Birmingham fought for control of racecourse protection rackets with gangs from London. Glasgow gangs had also been involved in racecourse protection rackets from the 1880s and came to notoriety in the 1920s and 1930s when violent fights between rival ‘razor gangs’ were widely reported.⁴ However, “real” British gangsters did not become cinematic icons in the 1930s, in the

fashion that Hollywood presented veiled portrayals of figures such as Al Capone and Baby Face Nelson.

The main reason proposed for this is that there was stricter censorship of crime in Britain than America.⁵ The moral codes of censorship in both countries shared concerns that crime films should neither encourage sympathy for the criminal, nor allow sufficient detail for the techniques of crime to be copied. Attitudes to crime in both countries implicitly accepted that crime films could have detrimental effects on audiences, but the American censors allowed a more liberal form of didactic moralising (that crime does not pay), sociological interpretation and criticism of individuals in authority. In contrast, the British censors were extremely sensitive to any criticism of authority and only condoned crime films in which the emphasis was on the detection of crime and not crime itself. In particular, the British censors rejected attempts to make not only British gangster films, but also imitations of American gangster films.⁶ This policy, as Jeffrey Richards has observed⁷, consisted of a double standard where only gangster films from abroad were considered suitable for British audiences. In exercising this view the censors were ideologically confirmed in their opinion that organised crime was only a foreign problem.

In British films of the 1930s, the "whodunit" murder mystery was frequently adapted from crime fiction. For example, the device of the investigator and companion, as in Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, on the trail of murderers, gangs of jewel thieves and master criminals, was commonly and variedly used in British crime films - *Down River* (1931), *Number 17* (1932), *The Four Masked Men* (1934). Most often the investigator-

heroes were of middle-class origin, such as writers, reporters, lawyers and senior policemen and the criminal gangs were, in the tradition of literary crime fiction, mysteriously and dangerously “other”, often headed by a cunning master criminal. For example, in *Dial 999* (1937), two Scotland Yard Inspectors investigate a gang of forgers led by a man known as “The Badger”. Thus, and in contrast to the American gangster melodrama, the representation of professional and organised crime was limited to a highly fictionalised portrayal of property crime gangs, such as jewel thieves and smugglers, presented using the drama of conspiracy, mystery and suspense and detection-centred narration derived from the thriller in crime fiction.

During the War, when the production of crime films declined, the American companies made a number of films in Britain which anticipated the more realistic contemporary crime drama of the postwar period. Warner Bros., in line with the studio specialisation of the parent company, produced three crime melodramas, *The Briggs Family* (1940), *Fingers* (1940) and *The Hundred Pound Window* (1943). This latter film included the apprehension of black marketeers and *The Briggs Family* and Fox’s *Once A Crook* (1941) both dramatised father-and-son conflict around the problem of juvenile crime, perhaps indicating the concern at the time over the problems of absent fathers during the War. In contrast, the American crime film developed quite differently during the War. “Private eye” films, such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Murder, My Sweet* (1944) and *Laura* (1944) and murder films, such as *Double Indemnity* (1944), introduced a darker mood into the crime film which has come to be referred to as film noir. However, the criminal hero tradition of the gangster melodrama also continued in films such as *High Sierra* (1941). Many of these films originated in American “private

eye" crime fiction developed in pulp magazines of the 1920s and gangster novels, such as W R Burnett's *Little Caesar* (1929). Although the American style of crime fiction was successfully copied by British authors such as Peter Cheyney and James Hadley Chase, their work was not adapted in Britain before the War and the more traditional thriller continued to dominate.⁸

The differences between the crime films of Britain and America in this period are, then, quite distinct. Thrillers were made in both countries, but Britain did not make gangster melodramas. The two contrasting histories of the crime film in each country allow for a consideration of the "Americaness" and "Britishness" embodied in the crime film at this time. In Britain, the investigating middle-class hero acted on behalf of society through a reassuring presentation of crime control. Rigid class boundaries were enforced and institutions and authority were upheld. Crime was seen as a dangerous "other" in society, but not part of it. In America, however, the criminal as hero allowed for ideological contradictions to be expressed. The criminal could act on behalf of American society's ideal nature, a capitalist liberal democracy based on self-advancement, opportunity and individual rights. American crime films were allowed to criticise authority and institutions and they dramatised the reality of professional and organised crime, whereas, to a large extent, the British crime film excluded it.

The British crime film, 1946-1963

Traditional forms of crime films established in Britain in the 1930s continued in this period and new forms developed in imitation of American genres, but with particularly British interpretations. British crime films became more criminal-centred, adopting

forms of dramatic entertainment associated with the melodrama and the thriller. As a commercial strategy the crime film became even more of a staple genre than it had been before the war. From 1946 to 1963 (when the production of British "B" films declined), a total of 1921 feature films were produced of which 676 (35%) were crime films.⁹ The genre was still dominated by murder films, but the representation of professional criminality, such as property and organised crime, was far more varied and significant than in the 1930s. Over 220 films (33% of all crime films) in this same period portrayed professional criminality and over half of these are concerned with property crime such as robbery and burglary. As a general summary of this body of films, a number of important characteristics relating to the crime genre can be highlighted. These are: a continuation of the traditional thriller; a greater degree of contemporaneity of subject matter; a wider representation of professional and organised; and a more criminal-centred narration.

The traditional thriller narrative device of a pair of investigators continued in a number of films, such as *River Patrol* (1948) in which the investigation is central and the criminals marginalised. However, some films are interesting because they combine traditional thriller narratives with more unconventional criminal-centred narration. For example, *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947) starts by focusing on the activities of a gang of black marketeers and drug dealers and the conflict between the gang leader and a new gang member. The film, therefore, becomes more of a conventional "Hitchcockian" thriller of an innocent man on the run caught between the villains and the police, although with a much darker resolution.¹⁰

Postwar crime films started to represent crime within a more realistic social milieu than had been used before. This was initially tied to the disruption of war, of demobilization and postwar readjustment and the availability of guns, and also in black marketeering caused by scarcity and austerity. This is evident not only in the cycle of films identified by Robert Murphy as featuring “spivs”¹¹, but also in the dramatisation of topical social issues such as juvenile delinquency, which allows Marcia Landy to conceptualise many British crime films as the “social problem” genre.¹²

The traditional range of jewel theft and smuggling was added to by robberies of mail-vans, banks and trains. Other activities associated with gangsters, such as the provision of illegal goods and services, were also shown in British films for the first time. These included drugs - *They Made Me a Fugitive*, *The Brain Machine* (1955), *Feet of Clay* (1957); vice - *Escape By Night* (1954), *The Flesh is Weak* (1957), *Passport to Shame* (1959) *The Shakedown* (1960); protection - *Brighton Rock* (1947), *The Frightened City* (1961); and gambling - *Soho Incident* (1956), *Never Back Losers* (1961). It was also now possible to make imitations of American gangster films - *No Orchids For Miss Blandish* (1948), *Joe Macbeth* (1955). Another later imitation of American crime films was the underworld film - *The Criminal* (1960), *Hell is a City* (1960) - where a range of criminality is presented in an underworld milieu.¹³ However, after a short period in the first few postwar years when a number of films were set within a more realistic social milieu and with criminal-centred narration typical of the American cinema, the pace of change was slowed and British crime films such as *The Criminal* appeared ten years later than comparable American films. Censorship remained a crucial determinant in how the crime film developed as a genre in Britain. The liberal policy of the Board that

allowed films such as *No Orchids For Miss Blandish* to be passed was halted when this film was greeted by a critical backlash and moral panic that forced the Board to be more cautious thereafter. This greater circumspection of the censors in the 1950s, arrived at in the context of a rising crime rate and attempts to liberalise law and order by the Labour government, encouraged British crime films to be closer to tradition and move away from straightforward imitations of American crime subgenres.

Criminal-centred narration of the kind associated with the American crime melodrama was evident not only in imitations of American gangster films, but also in many others, such as those which focused on the aftermath of robberies from the robbers' points of view - *Appointment With Crime* (1946), *A Gunman Has Escaped* (1948), *Naked Fury* (1959) and so on. Unlike the American postwar crime film, however, which developed new forms for the gangster film (such as robbery films and biographies of real-life gangsters), and film noir and more law enforcement-centred narratives (private eye films, police procedurals, government agency films), the British approach emerged out of a tradition of detective fiction. Sometimes, British crime films exhibited a tension between these two traditions. For example, *Noose*, rather than being a drama that is focused entirely within a gang of black market and vice racketeers, centres more around the traditional pair of investigators (a sports writer and his journalist fiancée) who bring the gang to justice.

The adoption of more criminal-centred narration allowed for a greater elaboration of criminal characterisation, of the kind that was conventional in America. The crime melodrama in both countries at this time was the product of a time of disruption to the

traditional social order of men and women and work caused by war and the postwar problems of reconstruction, demobilisation and the growth of the consumer society. One tendency of American crime melodramas was to dramatise relationships between men, women and money through discourses about sexual desire, romantic love, consumerism and work, and so on, by using crime as a context for the drama. British crime melodramas also shared this tendency, and particularly common in British crime films were narratives of men who are not professional criminals, but who were drawn into the underworld. In this way the morality of good and evil of melodrama was expressed through individuals possessing both characteristics. In British crime melodrama men were often motivated to commit crime by their desire for wealth that was denied to them by legal work. Crime in this sense was used as a way of asserting the traditionally economic productive power of men at a time when this was under threat. However, crime was also an anti-social activity which broke a dominant moral code which had to be enforced in the resolution of the narrative. Good and evil in female characters were more likely to be split between two women. Good women characters were identified with traditional femininity such as romantic love and normative social roles and bad women characters were often sexually and acquisitively assertive and identified with criminal deviancy or non-normative social roles.

These conventional characters, such as victim-heroes and the good and bad woman, were present in both American and British postwar crime films. In both countries, in addition, crime films could vary in the proportion of melodrama to thrilling suspense and action. Often crime melodramas would utilise thrilling action as they moved towards resolution. Commonly, this would involve the victim-hero as the "man in the

middle” between villains and police as he attempted to extricate himself from the criminal world into which he has been drawn. However, there were also some generic attributes that helped to define a typically British crime film. Firstly, whereas in America the ethnicity of criminals might reflect the reality of urban America, in Britain this ethnicity is more likely to be the result of the dominant ideology that continued to see crime as a “foreign plague” that is visited on British society. Secondly, there was a tendency to link professional and organised crime, and in particular property crime, with the more generally accepted serious crime of murder. The reason for this might simply be because it is more dramatic, but the ideological effect of this dramatisation is to present property crime as a dangerously violent threat to society.¹⁴ Lastly, crime was presented as a threat to the family. The murdered victims of property and other forms of professional crime were quite often presented as members of a family. Furthermore, the relatives of the victims were also often involved in the pursuit of the criminals who have threatened the family. Crime and criminals were straightforwardly presented as a threat to society’s basic social unit, the family.

These general characteristics were repeated in a number of variations across many examples, a few of which will now be discussed in more detail. These general characteristics can be elaborated by reference to a specific crime subgenre, the “heist film”. A heist in American underworld slang in the early 20th century referred to the hijacking of other bootleggers’ liquor, though from the 1930s onwards it has come to mean robbery, especially with a gun, such as the hold-up of a bank. This particular professional crime has been described as a type of “project” crime, and typically involves a high-reward target that is pursued by an *ad hoc* team of specialists assembled

for the job, which requires complicated techniques and advance planning.¹⁵ Project crimes were a new development in the British underworld in the postwar years and such crimes regularly began to feature in British films in the 1950s.

In genre criticism, the heist film has been relatively unconsidered and lacks clarity, in the sense that the terms “heist” and “caper” are sometimes interchangeably used to refer to quite different kinds of films. The heist film is traditionally seen as a continuation of the gangster film and primarily as a thriller. For example, John Gabree sees *The Asphalt Jungle* as the “first important caper movie” in a chapter on the postwar gangster film.¹⁶ Brian Davis describes the same film as a heist thriller in a chapter devoted to this subgenre, although he uses the term “caper” to differentiate this film from films such as *Topkapi* (1964) and *Gambit* (1966).¹⁷ Although both terms refer to films where a project crime is central to the narrative, heist and caper films are different subgenres of the crime film. A heist film is usually darker and more serious than a caper film, which might be comedic, or glossier and exotic, and less likely set in a context of a realistic underworld milieu. Thus, one could differentiate between the heist film *Payroll* (1961) and the caper film *The League of Gentlemen* (1960).

It is possible to construct some generic conventions of what has traditionally been seen as the “heist thriller”. This construction will then be reconsidered in terms of melodrama before applying this form of genre criticism to the British heist film in this period. In *The Asphalt Jungle* and other heist films such as *Armoured Car Robbery* (1950) and *The Killing* (1956), a professional criminal gang is assembled for a one-off job. The leader of the gang is usually the planner and involved in the recruitment of the

other personnel, experienced criminals with reputations in the underworld, such as “heavies” and drivers. Sometimes a wider underworld milieu of financiers, lawyers and fences may be shown. The heist involves pre-planning and the job itself is usually quite a short sequence. The project invariably ends in failure at this time and fulfils a film noir trajectory of doom from the start. Failure is consolidated during the execution of the robbery or else during its immediate aftermath when the use of violence leads to wounding and death and perhaps double-crossing and death caused by greed and/or sexual conflict over women. Escape often involves conflict with the forces of law and order and, with the fatalism of the film noir, the opposition of chance/luck/accident. Closure is made around the death or arrest of the gang members and the “loot” usually ends up with the leader of the gang. Quite often the money is literally “lost”, scattered and dispersed across the landscape.

These heist films primarily take a thriller format with a criminal-centred narration and with suspense created around the various stages of the robbery. They encourage the audience to identify with the criminals as they attempt the “one last job” that will enable them to leave the criminal life behind. However, this endeavour to achieve financial security also involves a significant degree of melodramatic characterisation and plot around the relationships between men, women and money. The men were motivated to commit crime for various reasons, such as gambling debts, but most often this motivation involved securing relationships with women. In *The Killing*, for example, the character George Peatty (Elisha Cook Jr) is a non-professional criminal who is the inside man at the race track that the gang plan to rob. As a man of small stature and low self-esteem, he wants his share of the proceeds to win the respect of his glamorous wife.

The heist film was not a prolific subgenre in America in the 1950s, but it was a significant one and includes other films such as *Kansas City Confidential* (1952), *Drive a Crooked Road* (1954), *Violent Saturday* (1955), *Five Against the House* (1955), *Plunder Road* (1957) and *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959). The melodramatic content of some of these films has tended to be overlooked because they have been conceptualised as heist thrillers by the male discourse of criticism and review that has informed the study of crime films. In fact, some of these heist films could more accurately be described as melodramas, because the robbery is quite insignificant in proportion to the melodrama that frames it. A more questioning and fluid conception of the heist film needs to be adopted to more accurately reflect the nature of this subgenre as one which draws upon both melodrama and the thriller and which can be illustrated by reference to British heist films such as *Dangerous Cargo* (1954), *Payroll* and *The Good Die Young* (1954).

In *Dangerous Cargo* the melodrama centres on the victims of crime rather than through the motivations of the criminals. The hero, Tim (Jack Watling), is a security guard at Heathrow airport and his suburban family is under threat when he is tricked into gambling debts and then coerced by threat of violence to his baby son by a gang who want his help to rob bullion from the airport. All the family are threatened, but successfully defended by the father and the police in the name of the mother (the police name their trap "Operation Janie" in her honour). The threat to social order by crime is dramatised through its destructive impact on families. The melodrama in this form is quite traditional. The hero is contrasted with a wartime colleague who is not married and has become a criminal. The gang itself is a very traditional one, with a mysterious, foreign master criminal as the leader (Karel Stepanek), surrounded by henchmen in his

hideout. A certain amount of suspense is created around the mysterious gang, but the film as a whole is more melodramatic than thrilling.

Similarly, *Payroll* has another plot centring on the suburban family as victims of crime. Harry Parker (William Peacock) runs his own security business and is killed in the robbery. The film shows him as a family man with a wife and children. His death disrupts the family and the wife, Jackie (Billie Whitelaw), typically pursues the killers herself. Property crime is conventionally dramatised with murder, and presented as an attack on the natural order represented by the family.

In other respects, *Payroll* resembles the American heist thriller. It features a professional criminal gang involved in a wages snatch. The gang's leader, Johnny Mellors (Michael Craig), is the planner who ends up with the proceeds of the robbery. The project crime involves careful preplanning and the robbery sequence is quite short but thrillingly spectacular. Failure starts during the robbery as the driver of the security van is killed and one of the gang members is wounded, but there is none of the fatalism of American noir. The gang self-destructs amid distrust and double-cross and closure proceeds with the death of all the gang and finally the flight, pursuit and death of their leader. Unlike American heist films, however, identification with the criminals is not straightforward. The narrative jumps around between the gang, the Parkers, the Pearsons and the police, uncertain about who should be at the centre.

The more American influenced *The Good Die Young* has a flashback structure and visual style reminiscent of film noir. It is a melodrama with four central male characters. They are all non-professional criminals who rob a Post Office van in a brief sequence near the end of the film. The robbery is less a central focus than a device for melodramatic characterisation and plot, as in American heist melodramas such as *Drive*

a Crooked Road. The flashback alternates between the four personal narratives of the robbers and their wives. Primarily for the men, these relationships are all, in different yet similar ways, emotionally or financially dissatisfactory. Rave (Laurence Harvey), the gang's leader, tempts and coerces the others into the robbery. Confronting them with their sorry circumstances, he reminds them that they all fought during the war and are therefore worthy of something better. This postwar malaise is a theme that underlies the melodrama in many crime films. During wartime men's status and self-worth is primarily achieved by performing to an audience of men. In peacetime the audience for heterosexual masculine performance shifts towards women and in the context of the crisis in masculinity caused by the problems of adjustment to postwar life, which this film addresses, the solution to achieving an effective masculine performance is linked to the acquisition of money. However, in an illuminating epilogue the film rhetorically concludes that money is not the solution to their problems. Over an image of the cemetery where the stolen money is hidden a "Voice of God" narrator draws a moral conclusion: "Four men. Four women. Four dead men. Buried here forever is what they thought they had died for. £90,000. An illusion called money, which in the end would really have helped none of them, would it?" Apart from conforming to the dominant ideology about the corruption of "filthy lucre", one could also extrapolate from this quote the ideological work at the heart of the melodrama. Money might ease the men's problems, but not solve them because the real problem concerns the pressures of patriarchal capitalism, such as the financial dependence of women on men, to which they are exposed.

In other heist films, such as *Payroll* for example, this relationship becomes explicit. Women are identified as acquisitive consumers, demanding money in return for reciprocation of affection. As in *The Killing*, the gang in *Payroll* are aided by an inside man, in this case an accountant, Dennis Pearson (William Lucas), who is motivated to crime to please his wife, Katie Pearson (Françoise Prévost). She is tired of his promises of promotion and money so that when he tells her that he will soon have lots of money, she is sceptical and rants: "When you get the money show it to me. I don't want to hear about it, just show it to me. I want to see it, smell it, spend it. Do you understand? Spend I". Abandoning her ineffectual husband she attempts to seduce and double-cross Johnny Mellors and in the manner of the femme fatale of American noir heist films.

Conclusion

As a commercial strategy, the crime film was a staple of the British film industry from 1930 to 1963 and yet it has hardly been considered as genre. In contrast, the American crime film has become synonymous with the gangster genre. A male discourse has marginalised other types of crime films and inaccurately privileged realism over melodrama. However, the reassessment of the classic Hollywood gangster film is largely irrelevant to the study of the British crime film before 1945. From this time onwards, "when the gangs came to Britain" – i.e. when the activities associated with gangsters were extensively shown for the first time - American films become more relevant for comparison than ever before. The timing of the movement from detection-centred narration to more criminal-centred narration in a significant number of films in the immediate postwar years was regulated by censorship and, therefore, censorship is a crucial determinant in generic change. British crime films were allowed to imitate

American ones at this time and even though they were unsurprisingly mediated through a British perspective, this was not achieved without controversy.

The concept of the crime film as genre used in this article is simply as a set of texts featuring criminal activities. Gangster and heist films are subgenres of the crime genre, defined by the types of crime on which they focus. Melodrama and the thriller are types of drama that have been used in these subgenres, although the terms "crime melodrama" or "crime thriller" could also be used as general descriptions of subgenres, reflecting the weight of their particular dramatic structures. Conceptualising the crime film in this way allows for a satisfying application of genre to the study of texts in their ideological and social context, equally applicable to American and British crime films. This approach has been used to extrapolate from a number of exemplary texts the primary characteristics of the postwar British crime film: more criminal-centred narration; the dangerous threat to the social order with property crime linked with murder, the family as microcosm of social order under threat; and masculinity in crisis in the period of postwar readjustment. The intention of this approach is less to define the British crime film as a genre by privileging subgenres such as the heist film or the gangster film than to establish generic characteristics that are repeated and differentiated across a number of texts belonging to the crime genre.

Notes

¹ Genre, as well as being a system of production, is a system of consumption consisting of exhibition, distribution and audience context. However, the aspect of genre that is primarily invoked in this analysis of the British crime film is as textual configurations of types of drama. In particular, this essay will consider how the thriller and melodrama, which can be understood as both forms of drama distributed across specific crime

genres, such as the gangster film, and as specific genres themselves, are central to the study of the ideological project of the British crime film.

² Influential texts, such as McArthur's *Underworld USA* and Robert Warshaw's influential essay on the heroic gangster, "The gangster as tragic hero", in *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Antheneum Books, 1970), have established the gangster/crime film as a canon of exalted texts assembled in a linear narrative, simplistically related to the reality of American capitalism.

³ As a genre, melodrama is closely associated with the "woman's picture", but the term may be used more generally (as it was by the American film industry) to describe many different types of films with highly passionate and emotional subject-matter. Christine Gledhill, for example, argues that melodrama dramatises moral conflicts and submerged social fears (Christine Gledhill [ed], *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* [London: British Film Institute, 1987]), while Laura Mulvey draws a distinction between female melodramas, which are masochistic and revolve around the suffering of women, and male melodramas which are less masochistic and stress the resolution of contradictions. See Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama", *Movie 25* (winter 1977/1978): 53-56). However, many crime films, such as gangster movies or film noir, might be classified as masochistic male melodramas, since the male protagonist often suffers a crisis of masculinity (being unable to provide for his wife and family, for instance), which is often resolved in death.

⁴ 'By 1935 the *Sunday Express* was confirming that "gangsters have come to Britain. Glasgow, second city of the Empire, frankly acknowledges their reign of terror. A thousand young men - not forty are more than thirty-five - rule the poorer class districts. Their insignia of office are the broken bottle, the razor blade, the "cosh", the knife, and - newest and most effective of all - the bayonet". See Duncan Campbell, *The Underworld* (London: Penguin, 1996): 120. This book is a good summary of the history of professional and organised crime in Britain.

⁵ See, for example, Robert Murphy, "Riff-Raff, British Cinema and the Underworld", in Charles Barr (ed), *All Our Yesterdays* (London: British Film Institute, 1986): 286-305.

⁶ *On the Spot* (1930), a script based on a play about a Chicago gangster, was rejected six times by the censors between 1931 and 1937. Gangster films set in Britain, such as *When the Gangs Came to London* (1932) were definitely prohibited. For a detailed discussion of these and other examples, and censorship in the 1930s in general, see Jeffrey Richards, "The British Board of Film Censors and Content Control in the 1930s: Images of Britain", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 1: 2 (October 1981): 95-116.

⁷ Ibid: 107.

⁸ For example, the hero in *The Saint Meets The Tiger* (1941) is the gentleman adventurer, Simon Templar (Hugh Sinclair). The threat takes the form of a mysterious gang led by The Tiger, who have robbed gold bullion from a bank in Bristol. Their

conspiracy involves trying to smuggle the gold out of the country. Suspense is generated around this mystery and the potential threat to the hero. A bureaucratic policeman is on their trail, but it is the competitive individualism of Templar who tracks the gang down, recovers the gold and removes the threat. The Saint does not conform to the traditional middle-class hero that was typical at this time. The character is a morally ambiguous aristocratic reformed crook in the Raffles tradition and *The Saint* films were mainly made in America. The British cinema in the 1930s tended to avoid such ambiguous criminal heroes.

⁹ According to statistics and categorisation taken from the mostly reliable source, Denis Gifford's *British Film Catalogue, 1895-1985* (Newton Abbot: London: David and Charles, 1986).

¹⁰ The villain refuses to confess to the police, and so the hero's innocence is not proven, which contrasts very neatly with Hitchcock's *Young and Innocent* (1938), where the villain's confession clears the hero's name.

¹¹ Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-49* (London: Routledge, 1989): 146-167.

¹² Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

¹³ Mary MacIntosh explains the criminal "underworld" as the conceptual way that "respectable" society makes reference to criminals and the places they inhabit. It could be added that it is also the way that criminals conceptualise themselves, as in, for example, the use of their own specialist vocabulary (cant) to define someone as "wide" who is familiar with the codes of the underworld and a "steamer" who is a law-abiding citizen. As MacIntosh outlines, the underworld is also a real social milieu with a long history of providing services for the professional criminal such as information about targets, contact with potential colleagues, methods of disposal of stolen goods and protection from detection and law enforcement. See Mary MacIntosh, *The Organisation of Crime* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1975): 18-27.

¹⁴ There were a number of high-profile killings associated with property crime in postwar Britain, but armed robberies were rare and seem to be over-represented in British crime films. For details on armed robberies and killings in property crime, see Campbell: 53.

¹⁵ For a detailed definition of project crime and other forms of professional criminal organisation, see MacIntosh: 28-58.

¹⁶ John Gabree, *Gangsters: From Little Caesar to The Godfather* (New York: Pyramid, 1976): 78-95.

¹⁷ Brian Davis, *The Thriller: the suspense film from 1946* (London: Studio Vista, 1973): 120-139.

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MEN, WOMEN AND MONEY

Masculinity in crisis in the British professional crime film 1946-1965

Andrew Clay

Joe Macbeth: For crying out loud, what do you want? We got the house, we got money, we're sitting pretty. Isn't that enough?

Lily Macbeth: No Joe, it isn't.

Joe Macbeth (Ken Hughes, 1955)

One characteristic of films featuring professional criminality in the postwar studio years is that they are only ostensibly about professional crime. More accurately they should be seen as films that use professional crime to express men's contradictory experience of power. Under patriarchy, men may be dominant but they can also feel a sense of powerlessness (Coltrane, 1994, Kaufman, 1994). From the evidence offered in British crime films this contradiction seems to have been particularly acute in the two decades after 1945.

Two separate, but occasionally interrelated, themes were prominent in constructing a sense of masculine crisis through narratives about professional crime in this period.

Firstly, attention was paid to the problems of readjustment of returning ex-servicemen in the immediate postwar years. A contrast in fortune was often drawn in crime films of the late 1940s between the unrewarded demobilized and the 'spivs' who had unfairly prospered in their absence. However, the contrasting of a satisfying masculine

performance in wartime with an unsatisfactory postwar experience of peace and 'prosperity', continued to influence the crime film in the 1950s and 1960s. The unifying theme of these influences was a loss of masculine status in peacetime. As the actor George Baker has recalled, 'There was an awful lot of people wandering about who were unable to find their place again' (McFarlane, 1997, p.38).

Secondly, there were those films which dealt in various ways with the ideological impact on men of the rising importance of women in postwar society brought about, for example, through the opportunities provided during wartime for women to experience non-traditional roles and through their centrality to consumerism (Hill, 1986: 25). Elizabeth Wilson (1980) argues that women were central in the attempt to build a consensual notion of citizenship, but that the apparent victory of feminist advancement for women was largely won mythically and ideologically. Nevertheless, the ideological construction of equality must have contributed to a worry amongst men about their place in this postwar world and a nostalgia for the wartime society in which they were privileged. Thus, the crisis in masculinity that emerged in crime films at this time consisted of both a feeling of a loss of wartime agency and an anxiety about the status of postwar women. In many crime films these themes are evident in relationships between men, women and money.

Men

The dramatisation of masculine crisis is a characteristic of British postwar cinema that is shared by a number of genres and styles of film-making at a time when films based on women's experiences declined and male problems were a predominant focus (Street, 1997, pp.61-91). The crime genre in the last two decades of the studio system was a

bastion of male protagonism. In the late 1940s crime films often feature ex-servicemen who are returning to a socially disrupted world where their sacrifice is unrewarded and their status is in stark contrast to that of the black marketeers who have exploited scarcity for their own self advancement. This problem was shown to affect both officers and ranks, although officers were more prominent as individuals, whereas 'squaddies' appeared as a group. For example, *Dancing With Crime* (John Paddy Carstairs, 1947) and *Night Beat* (Harold Huth, 1948) featured pairs of ex-servicemen from the ranks, whereas *They Made Me a Fugitive* (Cavalcanti, 1947), *The Flamingo Affair* (Horace Shepherd, 1948) and *Noose* (Edmond T Greville, 1948) had individual officers.

The device of pairing ex-servicemen together was used to tell traditional moral tales of contrasting fortunes for the male protagonists in the threatening postwar world. In *Dancing With Crime*, Ted (Richard Attenborough) and Dave (Bill Rowbotham (Owen)) are veterans of Tobruk now living in London. Clearly bonded by their wartime friendship, they have taken different directions on Civvy Street. As a cab driver, Ted is burdened with low status and little money, but is working hard to try and get married to his actress sweetheart, Joy (Sheila Sim). Dave has opted for easier money (obtained through theft) that he spends on a hedonistic bachelor lifestyle with girlfriends in drinking clubs and dance halls. Dave's transgression is punished when he is murdered by the real villains, a gang who are working behind a dance hall front. Thus, the film presents a threatening low-life milieu where organised crime and the 'Palais de Danse' are as inextricably linked as in other films at this time such as *Appointment With Crime* (John Harlow, 1946). As in most of these late 1940s films, black marketeering and other forms of professional crime constitute a perversion of the war because their replication

of the conditions of wartime conflict and excitement are in the interests of financial gain rather than patriotism.

In *Night Beat*, two recently demobbed commandoes, Don (Hector Ross) and Andy (Ronald Howard), return to London where, lacking in civilian opportunities, they reluctantly become police recruits. Don, because he is more stable and responsible, settles down to a life of low pay, low status, high danger and unsocial hours. Andy, however, is unable to adapt to demobilization and drifts towards what he sees as an easier and more rewarding job with black marketeer and 'swindle club' owner, Felix (Maxwell Reed). This places him in a position of danger where he becomes vulnerable to arrest and then falsely suspected of murdering Felix.

The male protagonists in *They Made Me a Fugitive* and *The Flamingo Affair*, however, are ex-officers who are tempted into the dangerous world of black marketeering. For ex-RAF officer Clem (Trevor Howard), in *Fugitive*, this proves to be a nightmare world from which he is unable to extricate himself. Clem is neither straightforwardly innocent nor heroic, although as an audience we would tend to identify with his battle with the real villain, black marketeer and dope peddler Narcissus (Griffith Jones). Clem is experiencing a peacetime malaise. His middle-class girlfriend observes that 'He needs another war'. He confounds this hangover from the war with drink and seeks some consolation in women. So alienated is he from any sense of purpose that he allows his fate to be decided by the toss of a coin. This propels him into the clutches of Narcy, a 'spiv', and results in Clem being falsely accused and imprisoned for the murder of a policeman.

Ex-Army Captain Dick Tarleton (Denis Webb) in *The Flamingo Affair* also attempts to cure his postwar malaise with women and drink. Dick lives in a topsy-turvy world where he has been reduced in status from commander to menial. In voice-over he describes himself at the beginning of the film as 'now plain Dick'. He works as a lowly garage mechanic and in the evening he sits on a bar stool buying drinks from his old drill sergeant. In his own words, he has fallen from a 'noble profession' to a 'ruddy injustice'. In contrast to the satisfying meritocracy of wartime, peacetime seems to Dick an unfairly egalitarian society of nationalisation and popular education, where 'people forget too easily' about soldiers like himself. His own sorry situation is contrasted with the luxury afforded by criminality when he starts a relationship with black marketeer Paula Danvers (Colette Melville). To keep this relationship intact he has to live up to her lifestyle and so his corruption into crime seems to offer a possible compensation for his wartime loss.

In *Noose*, however, the relationship between the ex-commando officer Jumbo Hoyle (Derek Farr) and the corrupt black market society is quite different. He is not corrupted into a life of crime, but rather becomes one of the primary agents of its destruction. Unlike the other ex-servicemen in these late 1940s films, Jumbo appears comfortably readjusted to civilian life as a sports writer engaged to a fashion journalist. He reasserts himself as a natural leader of men by leading a group of motley working-class vigilantes, including several ex-servicemen, into action against the racketeers who are preying on obedient society.

Far from merely being a feature of a temporary period of postwar adjustment the theme of corrupted servicemen continued into the 1950s and 1960s. It became an ideal

vehicle to express film-makers' sense of disappointment, loss and betrayal amidst increasing comfort and affluence. For example, Ginger Edwards (Michael Medwin), a former tank trooper, in *The Intruder* (Guy Hamilton, 1953), is denied a successful readjustment to peacetime life by a chain of unfortunate circumstances that reduces him to a desperate fugitive. Other films present ex-soldiers who are more willingly corrupted into crime. In *Soho Incident* (Vernon Sewell, 1956), for instance, Jim Bankley (Lee Patterson), an ex-Canadian airforceman looking for better paid work, offers to use his wartime engineering skills to help a gang involved in gambling racketeering. Ex-Army officer Turpin (Stanley Baker) in *A Prize of Arms* (Cliff Owen, 1961), however, is driven by revenge. Frustrated and embittered by a charge for minor black marketeering offences that has abruptly ended his career, he recruits two other ex-servicemen to help him steal a payroll from an Army camp.

Thus, not only were ex-servicemen shown to become individually criminalized, but they were also depicted as groups of men bonded together in crime. Disbanded wartime outfits were resurrected as criminal gangs in two films directed by Basil Dearden, *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955) and *The League of Gentlemen* (1960). In the former, an ex-wartime motor boat crew begin to use their old ship for smuggling and, in the latter, a group of ex-Army officers are recruited for a bank robbery. In *The Good Die Young* (Lewis Gilbert, 1954) another group of men come together to rob a Post Office van. Told in flashback, the film seeks to explain what has brought together four men from 'different walks of life' in a stolen car. They are a clerk, Joe (Richard Baschart), an airman, Eddie (John Ireland), a boxer, Mike (Stanley Baker) and a 'gentleman of leisure', Rave (Laurence Harvey). Their empathy for one another, as a disparate group

of strangers who meet in the pub, is possible because they are all war veterans experiencing a loss of role. As Joe remarks, they are all 'chartered members of the lame dog club'. Crucially, this 'disability' is largely represented by problematic financial and emotional relationships with women.

Women

In the black markeering films of the late 1940s, where ex-servicemen are drawn into organised crime or else attempt to overcome it, women generally were either presented as 'good' women who help the hero, or 'bad' women who impede or threaten his safety. In *Dancing With Crime*, for example, Joy helps Ted to track down Dave's killers by going undercover as a dance hostess, perversely adopting the disguise of the transgressive 'good time girls' whose relationships with men are reduced to monetary exchanges.

Sally (Sally Gray), Narcy's rejected girlfriend in *Fugitive*, supports and nurtures Clem in his quest to clear his name. In *Night Beat*, Julie (Anne Crawford), widow of the murdered spiv Felix, helps her erstwhile boyfriend, Don, to trap the murderess and clear her brother's name. Jumbo Hoyle is aided in *Noose* by his fiancée, Linda (Carole Landis), who, driven by a strong sense of injustice, convinces her boyfriend of the need for action against the Soho racketeers and pursues them through her newspaper articles.

However, these films also contain corrupt women who threaten the hero's safety or draw him into the criminal world. In this sense, these films invite a comparison with American film noir and provide further evidence for a British noir cycle (Miller, 1994). Clem's situation in *Fugitive* is severely worsened when after refusing to help a woman

kill her husband, she frames him for the murder she subsequently commits herself. The ex-servicemen who are criminalized in *Night Beat* and *The Flamingo Affair* are criminalized by corrupt good time girls. Andy in *Night Beat*, falls for Jackie (Christine Norden), a dance hall singer prepared to use her sexuality for material gain. A present he buys for her is stolen property and he is thrown out of the police. He then begins to work for Felix with the hope that this will provide easy money to woo Jackie. Jackie's ambitions, however, are for the more wealthy Felix and her true nature is revealed. Her love of men is not romantic, but sexual and materialistic. 'Money', as 'good woman' Julie remarks, 'is the one sacred thing in her life'. Rejected by Felix, who only wants her for sex, Jackie stabs him with Andy's commando knife. Andy's wartime souvenir and symbol of his more satisfying masculine role, is used by a treacherous woman to deepen his problematic readjustment to civilian life. Paula Danvers, in *The Flamingo Affair*, conforms to the 'spider woman' stereotype of *film noir* (see Place, 1990). She is identified symbolically in the mise-en-scène by her association with the spider and web lighting decoration that hangs in the Flamingo Club where Dick drunkenly starts to narrate his story of entrapment. When Dick meets Paula at the garage where he works it is clear that she has prospered from the war and postwar scarcity. She arrives in an American car, covered in furs and accompanied by a well-dressed man. Dick is quickly subject to her sexual power but finds that he can only pursue his obsession if he can keep her in the luxury she privileges. 'Love's all very well', she tells him, 'but it won't pay for the ride'. Her black marketeering provides her with money and thrills. She removes his moral constraints and encourages him to join in her transgression. In a post-coital moment of plenitude, he agrees to her suggestion that he should rob his employer.

Some of the films of the 1950s and 1960s also misogynistically presented ex-servicemen's postwar malaise in terms of problematic relationships with women. In *The Good Die Young*, for example, Joe, an American, has lost his job and needs money to take his pregnant wife back to the USA. However, his plans are frustrated by an oppressive, hypochondriac mother-in-law. Mike has been forced to quit boxing because of an injury that led to an amputated hand. His nest egg of £1,000, however, has been squandered by his wife. Eddie, another American, is ignored by his actress wife in favour of her latest co-star. Rave's role is one reversed in relation to the patriarchal norm. He is a 'kept man', relying on handouts from his aristocratic father and a rich wife who ceases to support his gambling debts. These problematic relationships constitute the motivational circumstances that lead the men to commit crime. Similar circumstances motivate the ex-servicemen in *The League of Gentlemen*. Porthill (Bryan Forbes) is kept by an older and richer woman. Weaver (Norman Bird) is trapped in an oppressive suburban household with his wife, father-in-law and the television. The leader of the gang himself, Hyde (Jack Hawkins), has been made redundant and is separated from his wife.

In *The Intruder*, Wolf Merton (Jack Hawkins), ex-tank commander, returns home to find that his home is being burgled by Ginger, his wartime crew member. From then on, he attempts to find out 'what turned a good soldier into a thief?' Merton discovers that Ginger's misfortune started from the moment he returned home to find that his girlfriend, Tina, had not waited for him and had taken up with a civilian exempted from service for 'flat feet'. Ginger had wanted to marry so that he could take his younger brother away from their abusive uncle. The brother had been accidentally killed running

away and, after taking revenge, Ginger is sentenced to ten years for the manslaughter of his uncle and becomes a fugitive and a thief.

Not every ex-servicemen's postwar crisis is presented as a breakdown in relationships with women. In *A Prize of Arms*, for example, women play no part in Turpin's drive for recompense. Also, *The Ship That Died of Shame* differs markedly from *The League of Gentlemen*, in the way that it genders the moral force for good as feminine. The motor boat "1087", for example, is gendered as female and, although it is a machine, it ('she') exercises a moral conscience against the men who are using 'her' for crime, by, for instance, failing 'her' engines. Moreover, Helen (Virginia McKenna), the wife of the film's hero, Bill Randall (George Baker), functions as his moral purpose for fighting the war (O'Sullivan, 1997: 179). In *The League of Gentlemen*, therefore, women are presented as one of the causes of male disillusionment with postwar culture, whereas in *The Ship That Died of Shame* they signify wartime moral virtues that have been lost or are under threat in peacetime.

'Good' and 'bad' women are crucial to Jim's readjustment to postwar society in *Soho Incident*. He is assisted into crime by one woman, but helped out of it by the love of another. Jim, recently arrived from Canada is looking for opportunities for easy money. He contacts an old wartime comrade who is working for a gambling racketeer, Rico Francesi (Martin Benson). Jim is taken on by Rico, largely because his sister, Bella (Faith Domergue), is attracted to him. Her transgressive femininity resides in her desire to control Jim. He is attracted to her, but she wants to dominate their relationship by buying him clothes and being the seducer, not the seduced. Supported by Bella, Jim rises in the gang, but once he realises the violent nature of the criminals, and especially

of Bella herself, he tries to leave. This is something she cannot tolerate. 'Nobody leaves me', she rails at him. 'I walk out when I'm ready. And you don't go until I tell you to'. Jim is a man manipulated by a money-conscious, controlling woman, but his relationship with 'good' woman Betty Walker (Rona Anderson), however, is based on love, not lust, on support, not control, and on middle-class restraint, rather than showy materialism. She represents the decent world that he had temporarily abandoned for the sake of 'a fast buck', aided by a 'fast woman'. At the end of the film we see Betty, dutifully sitting in court with her father, awaiting the return of the repentant sinner, Jim, to whom they have offered succour.

Money - Imaginary Solutions and Dominant Resolutions

In the professional crime films of the late 1940s, both society as a whole and war veterans in particular were shown to be vulnerable to the temptations of black market racketeering and victimized by its conspiracy. As protagonists, ex-servicemen were also shown to recover their wartime heroism by defending society against the exploitation of scarcity and the corrupt abuse of money and power by villainous black marketeers. This, perhaps, would have provided the male audience with a satisfying representation of traditional masculinity. Alternatively, it may also have reminded them of what they had lost in peacetime, for these films reproduced the problematic of low status and readjustment of ex-servicemen in the austerity of the first postwar years, but offered few solutions. Crime was imagined as one way in which ex-servicemen might seek to solve their problems. The hero's vulnerability to criminal corruption was presented with a degree of liberal empathy, but it was not condoned as a solution. Instead, these films

advocated hard work, self-restraint and sacrifice and conformity to traditional class structures of power.

For example, in *Dancing With Crime*, Dave is a sympathetic character full of warm and generous affection for his wartime comrade, Ted and his girlfriend. His murder serves, on one level, as a punishment for pursuit of easy money. In contrast to his hard-working friend, Dave may be morally weak, but he hardly deserves to be murdered. When Ted heroically helps to bring the villains to justice he temporarily regains his combat status by using physical action firstly, to overcome Dave's killer (Barry K Barnes), and secondly, to rescue the heroine from the gang's leader (Barry Jones). When Ted phones the police after his fight with the killer, we see that he is still wearing his army tunic, complete with medal ribbons and that his face is streaked with blood. Previously, the costume functioned naturalistically in terms of the poverty of his situation and symbolically to remind us of his loss of wartime status. Now it works to support a fleeting image of the recovery of a wartime role. Ted's brief and successful foray into crime-fighting confirms his moral superiority over his wartime friend. Dave's indulgent 'dance with crime' is fatal, whereas Ted's hard work and self-restraint is heroic.

Night Beat offered a similar resolution. Don perseveres in the police force and prospers. By the end of the film he is wearing a smart suit, rather than battledress. It is a sign of his successful return to civilian life and reward for his application and probity. Reunited with his 'girl', Julie, they link arms with Andy, Don's morally-fallen comrade, and lead him out of the criminal world. This world, as personified by the spiv Felix and acquisitive Jackie, is again associated with materialism and hedonism. It self-destructs

under the moral force of middle-class authority. Firstly, Jackie kills Felix. Then, when confronted by authority, she hysterically throws herself out of a window and out of the bourgeois world that she covets, but in which she has no legitimate place.

The ex-officer films contain middle-class heroes who stand in a different relationship to the dominant ideology from their comrades from the ranks. Jumbo Hoyle, in *Noose*, is a natural born leader who has few problems of readjustment and provides an edifying fantasy of middle-class social control. However, the readjustment of the other two ex-officers to the postwar world is more problematic and indicative of a society gone wrong. Clem, in *Fugitive*, manages to cause the death of the black marketeer in a rooftop fight finale. However, the dying man does not clear Clem's name. No imaginary solution is offered to his postwar malaise. The ending of *The Flamingo Affair* is less bleak, but still offers no solution to Dick's loss of wartime status. He is able to temporarily recover some wartime heroism by fighting crime, in a reversal of his earlier intentions, when he had named his plan to rob his employer 'Operation Solo'. When real villains arrive with the same intent, he uses the military tactics that he remembers from the war, relayed to the audience in a subjective voice-over, to repel the raiders. The recovery of his wartime status brings about a revelatory conversion. He severs his last link with the criminal life by rejecting Paula. He gives back her cigarette case, realising that, like the case which is plated and not solid gold, she is a sham. His release from her influence is symbolically confirmed, when the spider and web lighting decoration collapses as he leaves the club at the end. However, he is unable to escape the postwar malaise that Paula had exploited. Like Ted in *Dancing With Crime*, Dick temporarily

recovers a heroic masculine role by opposing crime. Unlike Ted, however, Dick has no 'natural' social role to return to.

The problems for the officer-class heroes in *The Ship That Died of Shame*, *The League of Gentlemen* and *A Prize of Arms* are that they are experiencing a loss of power that they possessed in wartime. Bill Randall, for example, the former commander of the torpedo boat in *The Ship That Died of Shame*, fails in business and is unable to get his old prewar job back. In this film, and particularly in *The League of Gentlemen*, wartime camaraderie and officer-class authority is restored through crime. However, the films conform to the conventional morality of the time and these illegal solutions end in failure.

Randall's 'rebirth' as a smuggler of postwar luxuries degenerates, without his knowledge, into providing an escape route for a child murderer. This fall can be taken as a cruel metaphor for the decline of postwar Britain itself. Randall and the ship's 'conscience' combine to end this sordid conspiracy and the final flashback images of the film remind us of postwar loss as the motor boat is shown speeding across the waves at the height of its wartime glory. Similarly, Hyde in *The League of Gentlemen*, experiences a brief renewal of purpose, before his nostalgic caper is defeated by misfortune and a vigilant police force

Turpin's criminal 'mission' also fails, but *A Prize of Arms* provides quite a contrast to the Dearden directed films. A mood of noir fatalism replaces one of nostalgia. Instead of the authority of George Baker's and Jack Hawkins's middle-class professionalism, there is the ambiguity of an ex-officer represented by Stanley Baker's more lower-class, tough

guy persona. Turpin and his two fellow ex-servicemen (Helmut Schmid, Tom Bell) use their Army skills, not as a way of recovering wartime purpose, but for financial gain. Only Turpin's personal motivation for the robbery is elaborated in any detail. In the early scenes on the night before their assault on the army camp payroll, Turpin's conversation reveals how at the end of the War in Hamburg, he was given an immediate dishonourable discharge for being involved in a minor black market coffee racket. Left with 'Just three holes on each shoulder where the pips used to be', he is a man who is driven by a sense of injustice and an inability to relax and forget who he was. This obsession/determination, combined with a sense of fatalism and dark visual style is what gives the film a noir sensibility. Turpin's doomed robbery unfolds against a background of an uncertain postwar Britain, where bureaucrats with briefcases interfere in minor law breaking, where British troops are mobilised for controversial post-colonial conflicts abroad, and where an Army without bullets pursues those who have robbed from their own.

Officer-class subjectivity is again privileged in *The Intruder*. Ex-officer Wolf Merton's quest to uncover the truth behind Ginger's criminality is at the centre of the narrative. This quest places him in a position where, out of a sense of wartime loyalty, he is forced to compromise his respect for the law and authority by aiding Ginger's escape from the police. Merton's integrity, however, is not compromised, because Ginger faces up to his responsibility and turns himself in. Only under the paternalistic authority of his old commander can Ginger confront his problems and seek a successful adjustment to his changed circumstances.

The masculine crisis of the ex-servicemen in *The Good Die Young* forms the main part of this melodrama. The heist and its aftermath constitute only the very end of the film. The robbery becomes one imaginary solution to the men's problems, but it is Rave who corrupts the others into crime. He exploits their vulnerability by reminding them of their peacetime malaise. He argues that they all fought in the war and deserve something better. However, again within the conventional morality, their attempts to solve their relationship problems end in failure. The 'gang' self-destructs through guilty conscience and doublecross. Rave is particularly at fault as a villainous, aristocratic wastrel, whose attempts to take all the money for himself results in the death of them all. The film closes with an image of the cemetery where the money is hidden (money = death) and on the soundtrack the Voice-of-God narrator draws a moral conclusion about the money being an illusion that would not have helped them. Thus, denied this resolution, there is no solution to the men's postwar problems other than through death.

Jim's corruption into crime in *Soho Incident* is presented with a degree of liberal sympathy similar to that accorded to Dave in *Dancing With Crime*. Jim's wartime background is again presented as a positive attribute, but moral weakness leads him to misapply his talents for material reward and it nearly costs him his life. In post-black marketeering Britain, ex-servicemen were shown to be still vulnerable to the machinations of dangerous foreign criminals and materialistic spider women.

Men, Women and Money

Crises of masculinity were not confined to ex-servicemen in the postwar British crime film. Professional criminals and assorted amateurs who become criminalized were also

shown to be experiencing 'female trouble'. Men and women were often inextricably linked in a nexus of criminal motivations in a number of films which stand as symbolic responses by men attempting to deal with the changing status of women. 'The picture hints that the wise- and the tough-guy are equally susceptible to feminine wiles, but it's too muscle-bound to make the proposition stick' (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 21 July, 1949). 'The picture' was *No Way Back* (Stefan Osiecki, 1949) and, as indicated by the nihilistic title, it was one of the darkest films made at that time. Terence de Marney stars as a boxer, 'The Croucher'. Like the ex-servicemen who become civilians, he loses a secure masculine role when he is forced to retire after losing the sight in one eye. He is further damaged when his materialistic wife, Sally (Shirley Quentin) deserts him when money runs short. 'I want better things from life. If I can't have them with you, well, it's just too bad', she informs him. She is a glamorous showgirl and the implication is that the relationship has always been based on money.

The Croucher becomes a drunken has-been until he is swept up from the pub by an old girlfriend, Beryl (Eleanor Summerfield), a 'good' woman whose love for him shakes him out of his self-pity. However, Beryl is a 'kept woman', the girlfriend of Joe Sleat (Jack Raine), the leader of a gang of dockland low-lives. Joe crows, 'I've got success and money and the girl's love me now'. He tries to keep The Croucher down by giving him menial jobs, but eventually his jealousy drives him to set up a raid on a jewellers as a trap to deliver The Croucher to the police. Beryl foils the plot and the three of them end up being chased by the police to a siege at a flour warehouse.

The Croucher's crisis in masculinity is more than a subtext. This film is a crime melodrama that centres around the boxer's change in circumstances and his consequent

confusion about his masculine role. The power of men is measured in this film through their ability to obtain women through money. Joe's villainy is that he achieves his masculine role through crime. Sally is also corrupt because she values the money more than the man. The Croucher measures his own worth in terms of being a champion with a glamorous wife. He clings to an ambitiously potent, heightened masculinity. In the warehouse, thinking about his past and looking at Beryl's photograph of him in his boxing prime, he confesses that 'A man wants to feel like that again', to be a 'real man' and a 'big shot'. After Beryl has killed Joe, The Croucher receives reassurance when she tells him that 'she loved him then, she loves him now'. However, this does not seem enough. His loss seems unbearable. Accompanied by a loud speaker that blasts out a radio broadcast of his past glories to the assembled crowd, he leads Beryl to their off-screen deaths at the hands of police gunmen.

It is significant that Shakespeare's tragedy, *Macbeth*, was remade in this period as a gangster melodrama, *Joe Macbeth* (Ken Hughes, 1955). This British film sets 'the Scottish play' in New York's underworld. Joe Macbeth (Paul Douglas) is a gunman who gets promoted to second in command in the gang. This fails to satisfy his wife, Lily (Ruth Roman), who wants more than the nice house and money that Joe's crimes have already provided. Her demands, therefore, go beyond conventional materialism, to the exercise of power through her dominated husband. She pushes him into killing the boss and taking his place at the head of the mob. Lily's scheming villainy is more heinous than Joe's profession of violence, since it leads to the destruction of the male world of the gang. This destructive reversal of traditional power structures is wonderfully captured in a photomontaged advertisement (*Kinematograph Weekly*, 27 October,

1955), which shows a large close-up of the face of wide-eyed Joe looking up at a castratingly terrifying full-length image of Lily in slacks. The copy asks rhetorically, 'who wore the trousers and who did the KILLINGS..?'.

The corrupt machinations of 'material girls' are again evident in *The Gentle Trap* (Charles Saunders, 1960). Johnny Ryan (Spencer Teakle) a locksmith who helps an old professional thief in a diamond robbery. Doublecrossed by a gang who try to snatch the gems, Johnny goes on the run. He is befriended by a 'good' woman, Jean (Felicity Young), who wants to know what got him into his situation. He blames Sylvia (Dawn Brooks), who has sold him to the gang. According to Johnny, she is 'A girl in love...with money. The kind of money a locksmith doesn't cart home'. Once the gang have been apprehended by the police, Johnny is free to build his new life with romantic Jean instead of acquisitive Sylvia.

Tread Softly Stranger (Gordon Parry, 1958) is a noirish story that revolves around two brothers, Johnny (George Baker) and Dave (Terence Morgan) who are sexually attracted to Calico (Diana Dors). Their problems stem from work and money. Calico's job at a dance club is low-paid. Johnny shirks from work and prefers to earn easier money from gambling. It provides him with a bachelor lifestyle in London, but recent gambling debts have forced him back home to lie low with his brother in a Northern industrial town. Dave works as a wages clerk at a factory and is motivated to steal from the firm to buy love from Calico. Dave begins to panic when the auditors are due and will discover the missing money. Once the idea of robbing the safe to hide the shortfall is jokingly raised by Johnny, it strikes Dave and Calico that it is the solution to all their monetary and sexual problems. Calico then takes the lead in persuading the men to go

through with the plan, taunting Johnny as a coward and encouraging the nervous Dave. Although misfortune contributes to their fate, it is largely Calico's predatory and selfish manipulation of the men that is to blame for their downfall. She pushes Dave into the robbery, forcing a gun upon him for courage, the gun that delivers the men to the police for the murder of the nightwatchman.

As his more confident and assertive brother observes, Calico has one hand on Dave's knee and the other in his pocket, she has got him 'by the short hairs'. In a potent image Johnny burns the stolen cash because it will incriminate them, but it also releases them from the matriarchal grip of the acquisitive Calico. The brothers's abuse of money is contrasted with the normative relationship of the factory worker Paddy Ryan (Patrick Allen), who is engaged to another employee, Sylvia (Jane Griffiths). Unlike Johnny, Paddy is trying to make money the 'hard way', working night shifts and staying in to save up to get married. Sylvia agrees with what she calls his 'old-fashioned idea' that he doesn't want her to work once they are married. Paddy is also the son of the murdered nightwatchman and in defence of his disrupted family and the dominant social order it represents he has the narrative function of pursuing the two men until their capture. Thus, a traditional male 'breadwinner' successfully asserts himself over two men corrupted by a disruptive, empowered woman.

A *femme fatale* is also to blame for the corruption of another professional male in *Payroll* (Sidney Hayers, 1961). In this film, Katie (Francoise Prevost) drives her husband, Dennis (William Lucas), into crime by emasculating him with complaints about his stalled career and their consequent lowly status. He is an accountant who becomes the inside man for a gang of robbers. After the robbery, Katie abandons her

husband, who has crumbled with guilt, and seduces the gang's leader, Johnny Mellors (Michael Craig) before finally failing in an attempt to doublecross him over the stolen money.

Blame was not always attached to women implicated in men's entry into professional crime. In *The Frightened Man* (John Gilling, 1952) and *The Man in the Back Seat* (Vernon Sewell, 1961), for example, men from different classes commit crime in a desire to please women, but they are experiencing a confusion of role more than a crisis directly attributable to the fault of women. In *The Frightened Man* it is revealed that an antique dealer has become a fence for a gang of robbers to pay for an Oxford University education for his son¹. Rosselli senior (Charles Victor) is bound into a life of crime by a promise he made to his dying wife to look after his son, a wife who 'always wanted good things' for their child. The son, Julius (Dermot Walsh), unaware of the source of his father's income, rejects the privileged start he has been given and attempts to become 'his own man'. His incentive is that he has found a woman, Amanda (Barbara Murray), to marry. 'You're going to be proud of me Amanda', he explains. 'I'm going to make money. I'm going to make it fast'. He becomes the getaway driver for the gang on a warehouse robbery and then sets up a diamond robbery with the gang's leader, Alce Stone (Martin Benson). Tragically, the father unknowingly delivers his son into a police trap because he is being doublecrossed by Stone. In attempting to escape, the son falls to his death from a roof. Everything has gone wrong because relationships have been reduced to financial transactions. The two men had made money too important. During

one conversation, Julius reassures Amanda that money is important because 'it gets you everything you want'. Unconvinced, Amanda responds by saying 'Except love'.

Similarly, Frankie (Keith Faulkner) in *The Man in the Back Seat* is experiencing a crisis in his relationship with his wife that he thinks he can solve with money. He mugs a bookie with the more experienced Tony (Derren Nesbitt), but the robbery goes wrong. Having driven away from the crime scene in the bookie's car, the drama of the film centres around the robbers's attempts to separate the money bag that is chained to the heavily coshed bookie and then to decide what to do with the unconscious victim. Frankie becomes involved mainly to help his 'mate', however, more detailed motivational characterisation emerges in the melodramatic scenes at Frankie's house. In argumentative exchanges between Frankie and his wife Jean (Carol White), he explains that he committed the robbery for his wife. He thought that the money would improve their relationship. Frankie tells her that 'You could have given up work and we could have got out of this stinking basement'. While Jean is content to stay as they are, Frankie is desperate to provide for her and it destroys him. Tormented by guilty visions of the ghost of the dead bookie, 'the man in the back seat', he causes a car crash in which Tony is killed.

Conclusion - Treading softly and dancing with crime

Apart from *Joe Macbeth*, the films used here to explore the gender relationships in the crime film between 1946 and 1965 do not centre around a milieu of professional crime. Instead they can be described as films in which troubled men take up crime in an attempt to solve problems that generally involve relationships with women. The films of

the late 1940s, in particular those featuring working-class ex-servicemen, are morality tales of good and evil, where the heroes encounter the villainy of 'spivs', racketeers, vice kings and the corrupt women who join them in their hedonistic activities. If the heroes are corrupted into professional crime, such as Dave in *Dancing With Crime*, it is presented with a degree of sympathy and empathy with the vulnerability of their condition and the problematic experience of loss of power, agency and collective purpose.

The post-black marketeering films also centre around the creation of a criminal identity. Men are shown to become criminalized as part of the problems of postwar readjustment (*The Intruder*), or because it gives them a chance of redress against their unfortunate circumstances (*Soho Incident*, *A Prize of Arms*, *The Ship That Died of Shame*, *The League of Gentlemen*, *The Good Die Young*) or through the influence of materialistic women (*Soho Incident* again, *The Gentle Trap*, *Tread Softly Stranger*, *Payroll*), or simply through a confusion over their roles (*The Frightened Man*, *The Man in the Back Seat*). Men transgress from a position where patriarchy is felt to be under strain. They want to repair a sense of loss, chaos, fragmentation and perceived decline in power.

These films, then, which are otherwise quite varied and disparate, are all crime melodramas of masculine crisis, across which the themes of wartime loss and postwar women are significant. In a society that was perceived by older, middle-class men to have deteriorated since the war, and where the growth of consumerist culture had raised the status of women at their expense, men had to tread softly, or they would get caught in gentle traps and dark webs. They were forced, one might say, to dance with crime and become fugitives, intruders in a postwar society that wouldn't accommodate them.

Footnotes

¹ In this respect it closely resembles both *No Road Back* (Montgomery Tully, 1957), in which a mother fences to enable her son to be educated as a doctor in America, and *Assassin For Hire* (Michael McCarthy, 1951) in which a man uses the money from his contract killings to help his brother become a professional musician.

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